

Dancing with Dangerous Desires:  
The performance of femininity and  
experiences of pleasure and danger by  
young black women within club spaces

Mary Gugu Tizita McLaren  
MCLMAR013

Supervisor: Dr Elaine Salo

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master  
of Social Science

Department of Humanities  
African Gender Institute  
University of Cape Town

February 2007

The copyright of this thesis vests in the author. No quotation from it or information derived from it is to be published without full acknowledgement of the source. The thesis is to be used for private study or non-commercial research purposes only.

Published by the University of Cape Town (UCT) in terms of the non-exclusive license granted to UCT by the author.

# ***Plagiarism Declaration***

1. I know that plagiarism is wrong. Plagiarism is to use another's work and to pretend that it is one's own.
2. I have used the **OXFORD- FOOTNOTE** convention for citation and referencing. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in this essay from the work, or works, of other people has been acknowledged through the citation and reference.
3. This essay is my own.
4. I have not allowed, and will not allow anyone to copy my work with the intention of passing it off as her or his own work.
5. I have done the word processing and formatting of this assignment myself. I understand that the correct formatting is part of the mark for this assignment and that it is therefore wrong for another person to do it for me.

I hereby empower the University of Cape Town to reproduce for the purpose of research either the whole or any portion of the contents of this work in any manner whatsoever.

Signed by candidate

Signature

12.06.07

Date

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to the following organisations and funds, that not only funded my research but also ensured that I had shelter and sustenance;  
South African and Netherlands Programme for Alternatives in Development  
(SANPAD)*

*National Research Foundation  
(NRF)*

*KW Johnston Bequest Scholarship*

*UCT Council B Scholarship*

*With all my heart I would like to say "Mazviita Deidi" for strengthening and encouraging me! To Sisi Priscilla, VaDerek and Socks for keeping me company in the last months,  
"Tatenda!" To my brother and sister! I smaaak your characters, ek se!*

*Elaine Salo, you are forever a source of knowledge and inspiration. And, thank you to the  
AGI staff.*

*The gender class of 2006/2007, you women are strong, intelligent and fun, keep on  
"constantly negotiating"*

*To my friends, Kasamba, Vimbai, Danai, Veli and Georgia for encouraging me in your  
different ways that helped me throughout the year.*

*LV for being a support for me, making me laugh and being amazing!*

*To the "boys" for always providing ways to help me relax and procrastinate!  
And, thank you to anyone and everyone in my life, as you have all contributed to this work!*



## *Dedication*

*For my gone forever mother,  
You will always be incredible to me.  
I hope you are proud...  
Smile down on us.*

## *Abstract*

*This research was carried out in Langa Township, Cape Town and worked with 7 young black women, between the ages of 19 and 26 years old. The aim was to explore the fluidity of identity, in particular gender identity, by exploring the performance of 'normative' femininity and 'hidden/subversive' femininity performed in different spaces. The focus was on 'hidden/subversive' femininity and the experiences of pleasure and danger in clubs spaces in Cape Town. It was found that these experiences centre on appearance, use of alcohol and dancing and expose the way in which young women negotiate between the pleasurable and dangerous that, consciously or unconsciously, push the boundaries of entrenched gender norms. In addition, owing to the nature of the research, constructions of masculinity were also explored and discovered to have a profound impact on young women's experiences within club spaces and in their everyday lives, relating to sexual relationships. This study aims to reveal the power and agency of young women, as well as the struggles and restrictions.*

## *Table of Contents*

Plagiarism Declaration	ii
Acknowledgment	iii
Dedication	iv
 Abstract	 v
 Introduction	 1
Chapter One: Understanding History, Space and People	8
Chapter Two: Methodology	41
Chapter Three: “Good Girl/Club Girl”: The Performance of Femininity”	64
Chapter Four: The Cultural Meanings of Identity and Space	84
Chapter Five: Up in the Club: Experiences of Pleasure and Danger in Clubs	100
Chapter Six: Out of the Club, Back into Life	119
Conclusion	139
 Bibliography	 149
 Appendix A: Table of Informants	 157
Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Framework	158

## INTRODUCTION

It is Friday and the sun sets on Cape Town and the city streets begin to empty as tired workers head home. As darkness falls life seeps back into the city. The streets begin to fill with the sound of cars on the roads, laughter ringing in the air, heels clacking on the pavement and music saturating the atmosphere. Along Bree Street cars start filling the parking bays and the line at the door of Pata Pata nightclub grows longer and longer as the anticipation of the night ahead begins to mount. In high-heel shoes, tight jeans, cute tops, dangly earrings, mascara-ed eyes and perfumed bodies; the women are dressed to the nines. Most of them are a long way from their homes, not only in distance. Initially, they feel dislocated as they negotiate a shift in their performance of identity in this new and different space.

The women come from Langa, the oldest township in Cape Town, built to house the black<sup>1</sup> labour force far away from the white suburb of Pinelands and those that surround it, in order to appease the fears of the white residents, worried that filth and disease will spread into their pristine homes. Today, almost 12 years since the first democratic elections, Langa is a bustling place, almost all black and Xhosa-speaking, but diverse in class, age, religion and culture. The streets are lined with big double storey houses, small multi-coloured homes and tiny shacks made from a variety of materials. They exist on the margins of Cape Town, caught between their traditional beliefs and practices, as *amaXhosa*, and the Western<sup>2</sup> values and attractions. They exist in a time of change in South Africa, which many feel may have passed them by as young black South Africans. They exist in a space where one constantly has to

---

<sup>1</sup> The racial category black refers to people who would previously, under Apartheid, be classified as African and Coloured is used in the same way, for people classified Coloured under Apartheid. These are contested terms and this is acknowledged, but necessary in that they enable one to name and distinguish the experiences of people that in South Africa are largely influenced by race.

<sup>2</sup> By 'western' I am referring to the white population with South Africa that retain characteristics of their origins and European and US American influences, including African American.

negotiate the shifting notions of personhood, of womanhood and manhood, of feminine and masculine. As young black South African women, they challenge these notions.

As they find themselves in the queue outside Pata Pata nightclub, they consciously or unconsciously, challenge entrenched gender ideologies that dictate, through various means, the expected and accepted norms of feminine and masculine behaviour. As I show in this study, normative notions of feminine behaviour necessitate the idea of domesticity and respectability as acceptable ways for girls and women to conduct themselves in society. Domesticity means that female-persons should occupy the private space of the home and partake in household chores and responsibilities. By doing this, girls and women not only safeguard their own reputations but those of their family and community. By performing the part of the “good girl”, a discourse powerful throughout communities around the world, the girls and women remain respectable. The epitome of a “good girl” is one who inhabits the private domestic space and when she leaves her home she does so in the daytime, with respectable people to go to respectable places. The extreme personification of the “good girl” is one of purity, self-control, responsibility and passivity. The “good girl” does not indulge in the “bad” and “forbidden” activities of drinking alcohol, smoking, taking drugs and having pre-marital sex.

However, it is understood that few girls and women are able to embody the notion of the “good girl” completely. Indeed, notions of femininity exist on a spectrum, where women find themselves located at different points at different times depending on a number of various factors. As the young women walk up the dimly lit staircase, as the music gets louder and voices start rising, the women slowly shed their “good girl” façade and don that of the “club girl”- a role that lies quite a bit further away from the “good girl” on the spectrum.

Nightclubs require a particular kind of cultural capital that manifests itself in the way one dresses, dances and behaves. There also exist particular expectations of feminine and masculine behaviour and interaction. It is for this reason that nightclubs were chosen for the exploration of hidden/subversive femininity, as within these spaces there is a heightened performance of heterosexual identities that impact in interesting and meaningful ways within club spaces and in young people's everyday lives. Hidden/subversive femininity refers to the performance of femininity that happens, concealed from parents/guardians and older members of the community, and that challenges the norms of feminine behaviour. These norms view women's alcohol use as taboo; see sensually provocative dancing as unladylike; believe that romantic and sexual relationships are illicit; and strongly discourage women's existence in and ownership of the public space. It is within these clubs that young women participate in these "forbidden" activities. The young women drink, they dance, they flirt and they open doors that lead to the exploration of their sexuality, through romantic relationships.

It is important to reiterate that normative femininity, the "good girl", and hidden/subversive femininity are not wholly separate and that they merge at certain points, depending on the space that young women occupy. Femininity is layered with nuances of meaning and experience whose manifestations are complex and intertwined.<sup>7</sup> Bearing this in mind, the analysis of club spaces extends to the day-to-day lives of the young women, with interest in their romantic relationships. How do the experiences and interactions within clubs impact or influence the young women outside the club? What parallels can be drawn? What similarities can be unearthed? How do the "good girl" and "club girl" exist outside the home and club spaces?

This research aimed to explore the negotiation of alternative femininities and the impact that space has on these ideas. By illustrating the changing and fluid nature of femininity, it can be argued that femininity is a performance that enables women to shift their behaviour to suit the expectations of different spaces, such as their homes or nightclubs. Based on the social and leisure activities of the young women within Langa, explored in previous research conducted in 2005, which looked at how the “culture of music”<sup>3</sup> influenced the construction of gender identity, clubs and parties were revealed to be the major pastime for high school girls<sup>4</sup>. This, coupled with the interesting and powerful heterosexual messages of expected and accepted behaviour within clubs, shaped the space in which this research would focus. Within club spaces, the interest lay in the performance of femininity through the body. Therefore, this research aimed to understand the meaning of women’s appearance, in terms of ideas around attractiveness and desirability, and the meanings attached to dance. Within this exploration, alcohol use surfaced as a profoundly significant part of club culture, and the implications this has for gender dynamics and dominant notions of respectable feminine behaviour necessitated further inquiry. In addition, this research aimed to explore the influence hidden/subversive femininity and the gender dynamics within club spaces have on the everyday lives of the young women, particularly in their romantic and sexual relationships.

### ***Feminist Knowledge Production***

The impetus for this research stems from a gap in feminist literature that excludes the experiences of young black women who exist on the margins of urban spaces. Most feminist

---

<sup>3</sup> This refers to everything that encompasses the musical experiences, such as the artists, songs, music videos and spaces that music is enjoyed.

<sup>4</sup> McLaren, MGT. (2005) Sweetie My Baby: Impact of the culture of music on the construction of gender identity. (Research project for the partial fulfilment of BsocSc Honours Degree) Cape Town: AGI

studies focus on issues of gender and power relations of older, often middle class, African women<sup>5</sup>. There exists a major gap in feminist knowledge on young African women's lives in relation to the gender issues and the power relations they have to negotiate. Besides Campbell<sup>6</sup> and Salo<sup>7</sup>, there is little published and acknowledged knowledge produced, in terms of research and literature created, on young black women in townships in South African context.

This research exists within the framework of feminism in an African context. My engagement with African feminism is in terms of knowledge production about African Women's lives and gendered struggles. Inclusion of women in knowledge production emerged in Africa out of their engagement with nationalist movements<sup>8</sup>. With this came an awareness of the absence of women in knowledge produced and the need to include women. African feminist scholars have argued that historically, knowledge production has excluded women's voices and experiences. The failure to identify the particularly diverse social realities and experiences of women leaves knowledge that is produced empty of meaningful representations of society. Since there has been very little feminist research done on young black women's experiences of identity and sexuality, this research aims to contribute to the filling of this gap with the new knowledge that has been gathered and presented here.

### ***Organisation***

Chapter One lays the foundation of the research, by exploring literature that addresses the many topics and issues that are embedded in this research. It aims to set the scene by

---

<sup>5</sup> See Hassim (2002), Walker (1991) Mama (1999)

<sup>6</sup> Campbell, C. (1996) *Township families and youth identity*. Co-operative Research Programme on marriage and family life. Human Sciences Research Council.

<sup>7</sup> Salo, E.(2004) *Respectable mothers, tough men and good daughters: Producing persons in Manenberg township, South Africa*. Emory University. (Unpublished PhD thesis)

<sup>8</sup> Mama, A. (2002) Editorial. *Feminist Africa: Intellectual Politics, 1*.



describing the historical, geographical and social context by, firstly, locating Langa within Cape Town's history, and then exploring the position of black youth in South Africa. Next it looks at different studies that endeavour to understand notions of femininity and masculinity in a South African context. It goes on to explore different theoretical takes on women and youth, in terms of leisure time and activities, particularly club culture. Lastly, it explores the sexuality of young black women in South Africa.

The second chapter addresses the methodological concerns of this research. It looks at feminist research methodologies and how these methods have been utilised in this research. The effectiveness of participant observation, journals, cameras, focus group interviews and individual interviews is considered. This chapter offers a narrative that simultaneously introduces the space and the young women informants, as well as myself, as the researcher, by exploring my positionality and how my identity has impacted the whole research process. Issues that surfaced around ethical considerations are also addressed in this chapter.

Chapter Three defines and explores the notion of femininity as a performance by looking at young women's ability to negotiate different spaces and the expectations within them. Normative femininity, which refers to ideas around respectability and domesticity, is explored as this is the dominant influence on the young women. The young women also perform a different femininity, a hidden/subversive femininity, particularly in club spaces, and this is dealt with in this chapter. Furthermore, the context in which the young woman exists, which impacts on their notions and performance of femininity, is looked at.

Presented in Chapter Four is the description of the different gender and class identities that are manifested in Langa. The identities of the "Ghetto Fabulous" and "Model C"<sup>9</sup> young

---

<sup>9</sup> These terms- "Ghetto Fabulous" and "Model C" will be defined and explored further in Chapter Four.

women and men is uncovered as it offers interesting insights into the meaning of class- and the assumptions made about people based on this. The young women's class identities directly influence their choice of nightclubs and this impacts their experiences within these spaces.

Chapter Five is an in-depth view of the "club experience". It gives a detailed analysis of the activities that the young women participate in within these clubs, with particular interest in the meanings of appearance, dance and alcohol. Emphasis is placed on the body, as a site, which is laden with meaning, particularly in clubs, where the performance of femininity is heightened. This chapter addresses the aspects of pleasure and danger that the young women experience in these spaces and how these co-exist and are experienced simultaneously.

The sixth chapter shows the comparison between the club experience and the day-to-day experience of the young women. It aims to illustrate how the gender dynamics and interactions within clubs are often mirrored in women's romantic and sexual relationships. This chapter deals with notions of masculinity as they impact strongly on the interactions between the young women and men in their lives. Issues of power and control are dealt with as the issues of identity and performance of femininity and masculinity are tied together.

The conclusion will integrate all the threads of the research presented to illustrate how the intricate threads can be woven together and makes recommendations on how to better the lives and experiences of young black South Africans based on the observations and research finding, gained in the field.

## *CHAPTER 1*

### *Understanding History, Space and People*

Young women's performance of femininity in club spaces in central Cape Town and the periphery of the townships within the context of post-apartheid South Africa is a multifaceted, layered and laden subject matter that requires in-depth understanding of the context in order to appreciate how the intricate threads come together in this investigation and exploration. A description of the historical process that gave rise to the space that the young women occupy, namely Langa, helps to reveal the social meanings attached to it as a geographically entity existing on the margins of Cape Town. The process creates a context. A context in which there are particular understandings of manhood/womanhood and masculine/feminine, which are in turn impacted on by the young women's identity as black South African youth. Issues of identity are central to the exploration of this subject matter because it deals with issues of gender, class, race and culture. It is essential that one understands how identities, as it relates to gender, class, race and culture, manifest themselves in different contexts and most importantly, in the context in which this research was undertaken.

This chapter provides a description of the process of the apartheid past that shaped Cape Town into what it is today and the social-geographical space that Langa township occupies in it. These processes, such as the Group Areas Act and Influx Control (Pass) Laws, led to the establishment of 'Coloured' and 'Bantu' townships on the Cape Flats. They also led to particular meanings and experiences of identity that impact on the experiences of young

people today. Therefore, black youth in Langa are located within the macro sociological picture of South African society, using education and employment as indicators of their structural location. Following this is a brief literature review of relevant studies on gender in South Africa that explore notions of femininity in the context of different South African townships in order to shape the particular focus of this research and as a way of comparing and contrasting different contexts. While investigating the meaning of femininity, it is essential that notions of masculinity in South Africa are also explored, as these implicitly reveal normative meanings of women and men's roles. For this reason it is important to include a brief exploration of masculinity to uncover the assumptions of femininity that run through it. What it means to be a 'man' often involves a particular kind of interaction with and portrayal of women. Important in the discussion of femininity and masculinity is the topic of women's sexuality that, once again, is an essential and major part of ideas of femininity and is closely tied to this research. Lastly, this chapter will explore the limited, yet useful, research carried out on nightclub culture while also focusing on the activities within clubs. These activities include the consumption of alcohol and dancing.

The following examination of information is intended to set-up the scene and the context in which this research locates itself. There are, as stated early, many layers that need to be uncovered and unpacked in order to understand the location of the young women informants and to best appreciate their experiences and what their experiences reveal about gender, class and age identity in our society.

## *Langa on the Cape Flats*

### **The Early Years**

Cape Town has a very interesting and complex history. Western<sup>10</sup> provides a concise and detailed account of the history of Cape Town and the impact of government policies in shaping the Cape Town still evident today. He offers an interesting, but limited, exploration of Black spaces within Cape Town, which tend to be ignored or sidelined in mainstream descriptions of the city. Western focuses on how race impacted on area of residence and employment. However, it is limited as it fails adequately to investigate the social aspect of black people in Cape Town.

Before the rigid segregationist policies of the Apartheid government, Cape Town was the least segregated city in South Africa<sup>11</sup>. It had an interesting dynamic as a city where whites in 1865 were the majority, followed by Coloureds and Asians. Blacks made up a small part of the population. However, colour lines were somewhat blurred as economic status enabled one to move through racial classification hierarchy, seek re-classification and live in areas or have jobs which were reserved for other races<sup>12</sup>. This mobility was easier for Coloureds and Asians as they often were skilled labourers, whereas blacks did not have this advantage. According to Western<sup>13</sup>, blacks were usually the least wealthy as they emigrated from the Eastern Cape without urban skills and knowledge of Afrikaans. However, Coloureds from the rural areas were able to achieve a higher economic status as they spoke Afrikaans and had the cultural capital of European society, in that they were able to assimilate into European culture. Although Coloureds had a higher economic standing than blacks,

---

<sup>10</sup> Western, J. (1996) *Outcast Cape Town*. Los Angeles: University of California Press.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

differences within Coloured communities existed. Generally, lighter-skinned Coloureds had a higher socio-economic status than darker skinned Coloureds. This was partly due to the fact that many Coloureds “passed” for white, thus allowing them the privileges of good education, skills and residence in up-market neighbourhoods. This did however cause great rifts between families as often not all members of the same family could “pass” as white<sup>14</sup>. Often what is not recorded is what impact this had and has on the identity of people who were able to shift and cross racial boundaries, leaving their people behind, socially and economically.

Western provides very little information on black townships in Cape Town or about the mainly Xhosa-speaking people that inhabit them. Although the Xhosa-speaking population was the minority in Cape Town during the Apartheid era, it steadily increased as more labourers came in search of employment. This posed a problem for the government who had to house the growing number of blacks somewhere in the city. The majority of black people were living in slums in Cape Town at the turn of the century but were moved to Ndabeni, but 5000-6000 people stayed in the slums<sup>15</sup>. In 1918, there was an outbreak of the influenza epidemic that called attention to the slums and areas inhabited by blacks. Consequently, the township Langa was established and all the inhabitants of Ndabeni were relocated shortly after the outbreak<sup>16</sup>. At the same time, the Coloured population was also increasing, consequently needing more space. The 1920s led to the creation of “*for Coloured only*” areas,

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Meier, J. (2000) On the margins: the emergence and growth of squatter settlements in Cape Town. University of Florida. (Unpublished thesis)

namely Maitland, and new housing settlements were set-up encroaching on the Cape Flats, such as Crawford and Ahtlone<sup>17</sup>.

In 1923, the Native (Urban Areas) Act was passed restricting blacks entry into the Western Cape. The Western Cape was declared a Coloured labour preference area in the 1950s, thus excluding the Xhosa population from the labour force: except when labour could not be sourced from the Coloured population and black men were employed for whom single male hostels were provided and this factor may have become an important determinant of the social fabric, family and gender relations. This was a way of dealing with the growth of the “non-white” population leading up to the Group Areas Act of 1950. The intention with the Group Areas Act was to create group areas for the various racial groups in settlements throughout the whole country in order to achieve total racial homogeneity and segregation<sup>18</sup>.

*“We believe that this Bill will be one of the cornerstones for the preserving of  
a White South Africa”  
Minister of the Interior T.E Donges<sup>19</sup>*

According to McCarthy<sup>20</sup>, the Group Areas Act led to the separation of residential and commercial districts and the ownership and occupation of property was restricted to the racial group to which the district was assigned. Black South Africans were denied ownership rights in ‘White’ South Africa and were required to live in the townships. The townships were administered by local agencies of the central state<sup>21</sup>. In terms of the pass laws, labour bureaux in the urban areas allocated permits to blacks seeking permanent residence in the cities.

---

<sup>17</sup> Western, J. (1996). *Outcast Cape Town*. Please note, only the first citation will be referenced in full. The subsequent citations will either be Ibid, referring to a citation directly after another, or the author, date and title. For full references refer to either the first citation or to the bibliography.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> McCarthy, J (2001) Local and regional government: From rigidity to crisis flux. In D. Smith (ed.) *The Apartheid City and Beyond: Urbanisation and the social change in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Witswatersrand University.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

Employers' demand for labour determined the quantity of permits<sup>22</sup>. Although racial segregation in housing, employment and other sectors existed prior to Apartheid, legislation such as the Group Areas Act, enshrined racial segregation. Successive South African governments used the pass laws, influx control regulations and the Coloured labour preference policy to control the movements of blacks and to prevent them from participation in the sharing of urban resources<sup>23</sup>. However, after the repeal of the Pass Law in 1986 and the abandonment of the Coloured Labour Preference Act in 1988, Cape Town rapidly became "Africanised" with most people taking up residence in the townships<sup>24</sup>. This led to the increase of residents, not only in Langa, but the other black townships like Khayelitsha and Guguletu.

There was a deliberate policy of under-provision of social services in black townships to discourage family settlement in the city. Housing backlogs, inadequate school facilities, neglect of infrastructure development such as roads, electrification and general public management, were all designed to discourage settlement in the townships<sup>25</sup>. Ramphele<sup>26</sup> argues that for these reasons, and others, the social fibre of township life fell apart. Poverty, overcrowding, migrant labour and a sense of worthlessness have weakened the family and this has affected black youth, and particularly young black women, more than any one else.

### ***Langa***

Langa means 'sun' in Xhosa and the township got its name from Chief Langelibalele of the Hlubi people in Natal, who was imprisoned on Robben Island. Langa is located on the

---

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ramphele, M. (1992) Social disintegration in the black community. In D. Everatt & E. Silulu (eds.) *Black Youth in crisis: Facing the Future*. Braamfontein: Ravan Press.

<sup>24</sup> Western, J. (1996) *Outcast Cape Town*.

<sup>25</sup> Ramphele, M. (1992) Social disintegration in the black community.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.



periphery of Cape Town and was reserved for blacks, who were mostly Xhosa speaking<sup>27</sup>. The reason for the creation of this new township for blacks stemmed from the problems of overcrowding in Ndabeni township- health hazards in particular as described earlier. The increase in the black population meant that the city of Cape Town had to accommodate the throngs of people streaming into Cape Town. White residents in Cape Town, in particular those in the adjoining suburb of Pinelands, and other areas grew increasingly uncomfortable with the growing number of black people, residing in such close proximity- blacks were subsequently moved out of the slums in the city and Ndabeni township to Langa in 1918<sup>28</sup>.

Unfortunately, there is little recent published information available on Langa. Wilson and Mafeje offer one of the only studies on Langa and, although dated, it can still give a sense of the place and of Langa's history. Langa was established as a "respectable" township, where the headquarters of state administration, for black South Africans leaving in the Western Cape, was located, as well as churches, schools and sports clubs. Moreover, Langa was initially seen as a middle-class township, as many of the residents were African traders and eating-house owners<sup>29</sup>. Despite this, blacks were unable to own land in Langa.

The first residents in Langa were single men, as well as men accompanied by their wives and children. The number of women residents remained low for various reasons, referred to earlier<sup>30</sup>. After the extension of the pass laws to include women in 1956, further restrictions were placed on their movement and employment, consequently reducing their numbers in the urban areas until the 1980s. For the men, the migrant labour system was one of the only ways for them to provide for their families. However, wages in towns were inadequate and

---

<sup>27</sup> Wilson, M. & Mafeje, A. (1973) *Langa: A study of social groups in an African township*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

<sup>28</sup> Western, J. (1996) *Outcast Cape Town*.

<sup>29</sup> Wilson, M & Mafeje, A. (1973) *Langa*.

<sup>30</sup> See Page 13

therefore, unable to cover the costs of family needs “at a very minimum level of health and decency”<sup>31</sup>. Owing to its history, Langa came to consist of male hostels (called ‘barracks’ in Langa) for migrant labourers from the Eastern Cape and family houses for the people who moved from the city slums and Ndabeni. As time progressed and with the increase of residents, there developed a diversity of people, making Langa an interesting and multifaceted place.

There existed a very powerful sense of gendered respectability and behaviour that created and encouraged a dichotomy between men and women in occupation, manners and dress largely deriving from the powerful influence of the Christian church<sup>32</sup>. This impacted particularly on young women, whose dress sense, mainly wearing of trousers, and behaviour, such as drinking and smoking, were disapproved of by the community as not conforming with its notions of respectability. In addition, owing to the number of male residents as compared to female residents, Langa was generally seen as unsafe for single women.

In 1930 the population of Langa was 1 766<sup>33</sup>. Men accounted for over 60% of the population. By 1960, the male population rose to 18 847 whereas the female population remained low at 2 175<sup>34</sup>. By 2001, only 7 year after the first democratic elections the population of Langa had doubled- with more than half the population being women<sup>35</sup>. As mentioned earlier, Langa is a diverse place in terms of income levels, households size, membership and individual residents’ lived experiences. There is an interesting variety of houses in Langa- big double storey mansions, small multi-coloured houses and shacks in the informal settlements, all adding to the intricacies of this space, that differs profoundly not

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. (3)

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Census 2001

only from much of Cape Town, but the soul deadening uniformity of black townships elsewhere in South Africa.

### *The Structural Location of Black Youth in South African Society*

This research set out to focus on young women who fit into the category of youth. There are various definitions of youth- the United Nations and World Bank uses 15-24 years and the National Youth Commission Act definition is 14-35 years- which is the definition used in this research<sup>36</sup> The young women informants' ages range between 18 to 26 years old, thereby placing them in this category. For this reason it is pertinent to explore the position of youth in South Africa in general. As *young* women they have interesting and complex identities and experiences. As *Black* young women, their experiences are further impacted on and complicated, especially as they occupy geographical space on the margins of Cape Town. Therefore it is also pertinent to relate their situation to the context in which South African Black youth in general exist.

A great deal of research has been carried out in an attempt to understand youth during the Apartheid era, with particular interest in their political involvement in the struggle<sup>37</sup>. For some of the young women informants included in this study, the anti-apartheid struggle is a vague memory. The oldest women informant would have been 14 years old at the time of the first democratic election held in 1994. For the youngest of the group, her mother would have been a teenager in the 1980s. Therefore, understanding the youth in the 1980s and 1990s, during Apartheid, sheds light on the young women's parents' generation, the values they

---

<sup>36</sup> Goedgedacht Forum for Social Reflection: Positioned between global trends and local realities, how are South African youth shaping their identity? (19.02.05)

<sup>37</sup> Bundy, C. (1993). *At War with the Future? Black South African Youth in the 1990s.*

imbibed as well as on the values passed onto the young women themselves and helps one understand how their family structures have been influenced by these experiences.

According to Bundy<sup>38</sup>, there were a number of factors that impacted on youth identity in the 1990s and that still might be relevant to youth today. These included the impact of urbanisation, poor education and societal violence. He argues that with the increase of black youth in urban settings conditioned by these factors, it was likely that there would also be an increase in criminal gangs and street children. With regard to violence, he sees it as coming to form part of youth culture, not only relating to their involvement in the political upheavals of post 1976 South Africa but also carrying through in their day-to-day lives and experiences. The impact of political consciousness and awareness has also given rise to the youth culture of rebelliousness and resistance that manifests itself in different ways<sup>39</sup>, not only politically. According to Tselane<sup>40</sup>, youth have a tendency to reject established norms and values, especially as they see parents and/or the adult world as being conservative. The youth culture is rebellious, expressing itself through aggression, drunkenness, drug addiction, criminality and sexual promiscuity<sup>41</sup>.

For the youth of today, dubbed “Generation Born Free”, political awareness and activism of the previous decades does not hold as much significance<sup>42</sup>. Masland, in his article in 2004 contends that these youth are apolitical and their concerns revolve around sports, relationships, clothes, computers, malls and *Kwaito*<sup>43</sup>. However, one could argue that they

---

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Tselane, T. (1989) Black South African youth culture. Dissertation presented at Wits University Sociology department.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Masland, T. (2004) Generation Born Frees. *Newsweek*, 143: 14, 42.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. *Kwaito* music emerged out of the political and economic climate of the late and post-apartheid era- the early 1990s. The word *kwaito* comes from *amakwaitosi*, meaning gangster in *isicamtho* (township slang) *Kwaito*

follow the tradition of being rebellious in so far as they challenge societal norms and push the boundaries. Interestingly, within these accounts of young culture and experience there is no distinction between the experiences of young men and young women, as they are both grouped together under the title of “youth”. However, one can argue that owing to gender norms and roles entrenched in our society, young women and young men have very different experiences, thus begging the question as to whether these accounts of youth and youth culture include young women? Unfortunately, the failure to acknowledge gender, in these above mentioned theorists’ analyses, is a damaging gap in much of the literature on youth.

The CASE Youth 2000 study is said to be a comprehensive review of living conditions, opinions, attitudes and lifestyle and expectations of South African youth. This report is useful in mapping out and locating youth within the post-Apartheid context. However, it is difficult to locate young black women within these reports, as discussed earlier. Although statistics are broken down by race or gender, there is no break down by race *and* gender. Nevertheless, it is still useful as a way of locating young black people in the broader South African society, although the aspect of gender will affect these experiences.

### ***Education and Employment***

Conventionally one would expect most youth to be located in educational institutions or the early years of employment. However, Table 1 displays findings from the CASE Youth study, which reveals that black youth in South Africa are under-represented in these educational institutions- particularly tertiary education. Without an education and skills, young black people are a major part of unemployment in South Africa.

---

songs are about life in the townships and about the experience of the post-apartheid generation. It is a fusion of hip-hop, *mbaqanga*, jazz and is multi-lingual.

	African	Coloured	Indian	White
None/primary	19%	13%	2%	2%
Secondary	55%	62%	40%	38%
Matric	21%	18%	47%	29%
Post-matric	6%	7%	11%	32%

Table 1.  
Education  
attainment by  
race in 2000<sup>44</sup>

As Table 1 illustrates, education is an area in which black and Coloured youth are disadvantaged. For the purpose of this research I will confine myself to statistics pertaining to black youth only. There is a disproportionate number of African youth who achieve matric- 21% who make it- and who have tertiary education- 6% advance this far. Reasons provided by the focus group interviews in the Youth 2000 study, revealed that lack of money was the main reason why most young people do not advance in schooling, as they are restricted by their socio-economic status. Census 2001 reveals that in Langa, more women than men attend primary and secondary school and achieve higher levels of education.

One's level of education has a direct impact on one's ability to gain employment. As a result, according to CASE Youth, 70% of black youths were unemployed in 2000. In Langa, 25% of the population was unemployed in 2001, with equal numbers of men and women<sup>45</sup>. In addition, unemployment was higher in non-urban areas (73%) than urban areas (53%). CASE Youth goes onto state that the reasons given by the youth for the high unemployment rate were that there were not enough jobs available, they lacked experience and skills and there were too many foreigners from other African countries.

<sup>44</sup> CASE Youth 2000. *A study of youth in South Africa*. Braamfontein: Royal Netherlands Embassy.

<sup>45</sup> Census 2001

There are many reasons why black youth are the most unlikely to excel in education and thus affect their chances of employment. One may be a sense of identity and belonging, which for township youth might be unclear and confusing. According to Ramphele<sup>46</sup>, young people in the townships are facing a dilemma, as they do not know who they are or where they fit in. She states that there is a clash between 'western' culture and African culture, a clash, which the youth experience most, as they exist on middle ground- between the city and the countryside, both of which marginalize them. They are caught in a space that has no ready- defined traditions or customs or culture and which is therefore in a way under constant construction – and de-construction. It is a space where family, for instance, may have different meaning as migrant labour has led to single parent households headed by women<sup>47</sup>. This has greatly affected young men who grow up without a positive male role model and without understanding what their role is- hence the title of Ramphele's article 'Teach Me How to Be a Man'. Notions of masculinity are questioned and often men are left confused. What about the young women? Ramphele fails to ask meaningful and in-depth questions about where young women's gendered identities feature in these female-headed households. Again the gap- there exists a dearth of literature that addresses the formation of women's gendered identities. Very little is known about how femininities are constructed. Consequently the aims of this study, which examines varying notions and performances of femininity seeks to add to a growing body of knowledge about the construction of youthful femininities in urban South Africa.

---

<sup>46</sup> Ramphele, M. (2002) *Steering by the stars: Being young in South Africa*. Cape Town: Tafelberg.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid

## *Femininities and Masculinities: Constructions and Meanings*

### *Femininities: The Good Girl*

Femininities can be understood as the meanings attached to the female-person in terms of her behaviour, roles and appearance. This feminine behaviour, which shifts and changes with age, socio-economic and cultural status, is learnt through different mediums, such as family, school, and religion<sup>48</sup>. Femininities are where women's gendered identities are constructed, policed and negotiated. And it is with this focus that the exploration of theories of femininity and the experiences of women will be explored.

Generally, there are few studies that explore femininity and even fewer that explore it within a township context in South Africa. Campbell, Salo and my own research<sup>49</sup>, carried out in 2005, are some of the few that investigate the different notions of femininity in township spaces in South Africa. In addition, Mupotsa<sup>50</sup> offers an interesting insight into femininities in a Zimbabwean context that can be useful for comparison with the South African example. The studies above all address issues around gender identity and sexuality, in different communities, but reveal similar notions of femininity in these communities.

In a study by Campbell<sup>51</sup> called "Township families and youth identity" young women feature within specific categories. Under the theme of 'Code of Conduct', she identifies young women's life challenges as being freedom of movement and sexual conduct, whereas young men's life challenges are crime and alcohol and the challenge experienced by both young men and women, is 'interpersonal conduct', as it relates to family and household responsibilities<sup>52</sup>.

---

<sup>48</sup> Campbell, C. (1996) *Township families and youth identity*.

<sup>49</sup> See Salo (2004), Campbell (1996) and McLaren (2005)

<sup>50</sup> Mupotsa, D. (2005) *Zvimwe Hazvibunzwe: On the politics of being a black Zimbabwean women and a sexual being*. (Research project for the partial fulfilment of BsocSc Honours Degree) Cape Town: AGI

<sup>51</sup> Campbell, C. (1996) *Township families and youth identity*.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.



The life challenges of the young women had more to do with their control over their bodies in terms of what spaces they could occupy freely and issues relating to their sexuality, for instance whether to abstain from sex or remaining faithful to one boyfriend. The young women experienced a great deal of pressure to participate in household chores and were wary of placing any extra burden on their families, mainly by having children outside of marriage.

Salo<sup>53</sup> explores a community in Manneberg and is particularly interested in young women's sexuality. Her study examines how the norms relating to acceptable femininity are constructed for young women in Manenberg and how this informs meanings of their sexuality<sup>54</sup>. Within this community, how young women conduct themselves is a reflection on their mothers, families and the community at large. A respectable girl is expected to go to school, come home and do the chores, then go out with an escort (often a boyfriend known to the family) and socialise with people thought to have 'good' reputations and she should be home before dark.<sup>55</sup> She should have respect for her mother and elders, have loyalty to the household, be obedient, dress modestly, be domesticated and be sexually passive. All of these traits represent a 'good girl'.<sup>56</sup>

The discourse of the "good girl" runs through the experiences of many young women. In my own earlier research I found the theme of the "good girl" is powerful in many communities, including that of Langa, where high school girls are constantly aware of the pressure to conform to the image of the good girl.<sup>57</sup> These young women had very little free time as their days were spent at school and doing chores around the house. They constantly had to negotiate access to spaces that are seen as "bad" or "forbidden" but where they are able

---

<sup>53</sup> Salo, E. (2004) Respectable mothers, tough men and good daughters.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid

<sup>55</sup> Ibid

<sup>56</sup> Ibid

<sup>57</sup> McLaren, MGT. (2005) Sweetie my baby.

to enjoy themselves and get some relief from their burdens at home.<sup>58</sup> These young women were cautious not to have their parents/guardians find out about their romantic relationships because a “good girl”, in this context, does not have a boyfriend. If she does have a boyfriend he must be known to the family and accepted as a respectable man.

These three studies indicate shared norms of femininity across race and some degree, class. Although the contexts of the research were different, all studies indicated that all the young women studied were expected to adhere to similar norms of femininity. There are certain places and areas that a ‘good girl’ should not go to- some of these being shebeens and ‘dangerous’ unsavoury neighbourhoods. There are also certain people with whom a ‘good girl’ should not socialise. To ensure that a girl remains respectable, her movement is monitored and mothers, other adult women and men police her behaviour. The young woman’s movement is restricted to ensure she behaves in a way that will guarantee a bright future and her family’s respect. This future would include a suitable male spouse and a good reputation in the community.

In addition, according to the notion of the “good girl” young women are expected to be sexually passive and demure. The Manenberg study indicates that for a number of young women their first sexual experience was by force and unwanted<sup>59</sup>. In the Manenberg community it is expected that young men exercise their right to initiate sexual acts by physical force. This is also true for many young black women, who are likewise forced to have sex, either through physical coercion or peer pressure<sup>60</sup>. These cases illustrate how a young woman’s sexuality is a site of power and struggle to control this site through various means

---

<sup>58</sup> Ibid

<sup>59</sup> Salo, E. (2004) *Respectable mothers, tough men and good daughters*.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid

<sup>60</sup> Campbell, C. (1996) *Township families and youth identity*.

and at many levels. In Manenberg, a young woman's sexuality is carefully surveyed by her mother, other household members and the community in their attempts to keep the social fabric intact. Campbell's study revealed how young women receive mixed messages about sexuality. On the one hand, parents encourage them to abstain from sex so as to avoid early pregnancy and the added economic burden that it entails. They are also encouraged to abstain in order not to be labelled a 'bitch', whore or slut. On the other hand, boyfriends and the young women's peers encourage them to have sex<sup>61</sup>. However, being sexually active gives the young women access to a world of intrigue and secrecy hidden away from parents. Being sexually active also exposes them to the notions of masculinity that is revealed in their romantic and sexual relationships with young men.

### ***To be a Real "Man": Notions of Masculinity***

What it means to be a 'man' often involves a particular kind of interaction with and portrayal of women and this is learnt through the various stages as boys become men. It is important to include a brief exploration of masculinity to uncover the assumptions of femininities that run through them.

There are various ways in which masculinities are constructed and taught to young boys as they become men. As Ramphele<sup>62</sup> notes, within the context of the townships in the Cape, it is often the case that boys are torn between their traditional Xhosa customs and practices while also being influenced by Western ideas. Xaba<sup>63</sup> begins his study on militant masculinity by looking at how in the Xhosa tradition, boys become 'men' through the rites of initiation usually done through circumcision and education on the normative masculinity of Xhosa culture. Where a young man in Langa goes for his initiation is dependent on how long

---

<sup>61</sup> Ibid

<sup>62</sup> Ramphele, M. (2002) *Steering By the Stars*.

<sup>63</sup> Xaba, T. (1997) Masculinities in Southern Africa. Colloquium. University of Natal, Durban, 2-4 July 1997.

he has resided in the city. For the boys who were born and still have family in the rural homes, usually the Eastern Cape, they will return home. The boys who have lived in an urban setting all their lives, will attend their initiation on the outskirts of the township. It is here that the boys learn what is expected of them as they make their transition into manhood. In terms of his identity as a Xhosa man, it is expected that on his return from his initiation he changes his behaviour according to the masculinities appropriate to the manhood he has been inducted into<sup>64</sup>.

The notion of masculinity, like other socially constructed ideas, is changing and fluid and this is evident from Xaba's analysis of differing notions of masculinity as embodied in the culture of the freedom struggle during the apartheid years<sup>65</sup>. During the freedom struggle these men learnt and embodied a militant type of masculinity that was necessary. However, with the demise of Apartheid in 1994 they found that they were unable to fit into the shifting notions of masculinity that required them to be law-abiding breadwinners for their families, only to find that they were unable to find jobs and they were not needed in the family because while they were away, women took over the running of the households<sup>66</sup>. This illustrates the changing nature of masculinity, where a masculinity, when no longer appropriate, takes on other forms or may be displaced by alternative of masculinity, for instance that of the "*amagents*".

According to Mtebule (2001), "*amagents*" are manifestation of a new breed, of a new class whose trademark is materialist exhibitionism- flashy cars, expensive clothes and glamorous women as defining possessions of 'the man'. Women are seen as passive objects to be owned and treated as such. Often, women are the objects of these young men's violence,

---

<sup>64</sup> Xaba, T. (1997) Masculinities in Southern Africa.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Ramphela, M. (1992) Social disintegration in the black community.

such as rape. According to Sielder<sup>67</sup>, by witnessing the treatment of women around them and realising their advantages men grow up with the belief that they are superior to women. However, men often feel they have to prove their male identity and it is perceived that risky behaviour can affirm their masculinity. Owing to their sense of superiority and using it as a means to legitimate violence against women, men prove their manhood at women's expense<sup>68</sup>. Although Sielder's study focuses on Western constructs and understandings of masculinity, it is still useful and applicable in the context of South Africa. However, it is also important to understand the context in which black South African men exist, in order to understand the constructs of masculinity and the interaction with women.

The majority of young men in the township are constant economic victims, trapped in a situation where there is no local working economy, thus leaving these men with poor education facilities and almost non-existent employment opportunities<sup>69</sup>. Mtebule(2001) explores another way for young men to construct their identities, which is the "Y" generation, an emerging urban youth culture. The culture of the "Y" generation centres around *Kwaito* music and is characterised by fun times, parties and good living.

### *Engendered Leisure: "A woman's work is never done"*

*According to the four young women, a good girl is one who goes straight home after school and does housework and she is "always at home". At home, the young women have a great deal of responsibilities that allow them very little leisure time... The private and domestic space is seen as the 'natural' and proper space for these young women to occupy. On the other*

---

<sup>67</sup> Siedler, V. (2006) *Young Men and Masculinities: Global Cultures and Intimate Lives*. New York: Zed Books

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Mtebule, N (2001). The Burden of Race? 'Whiteness' and 'Blackness' in Modern South Africa

*hand, young men occupy the public space; the streets of Langa, the 'Y' centre, shebeens and clubs*<sup>70</sup>.

There is much to understand about constructions of masculinity and how they interrelate with notions of femininity. The leisure activities of young people is an interesting space to explore these interactions. Campbell's research suggests that for young women there is a dialectical relationship between access to leisure time and activities and issues of gender, race, age and class<sup>71</sup>. The above extract reveals how in the Langa community, young men and women experience leisure differently. Firstly, young men have more leisure time due to the fact that many of them are not burdened by household chores and responsibilities. Secondly, due to assumptions about gender roles and norms, they are free to access public spaces. On the other hand, young women have very little leisure time as they have more responsibilities. In addition, there are stricter controls over their behaviour and mobility<sup>72</sup> thus understandings of leisure come loaded with complicated gender and class assumptions.

Debates are ongoing about definitions of leisure, work (paid and unpaid) and the gendered nature of these terms. According to Green<sup>73</sup>, the concept of leisure is abstract, meaning it is contextual and fluid. Common elements of attempts to define leisure include; pleasure, free choice and periods of time<sup>74</sup>. Roberts<sup>75</sup>, includes as elements of leisure; a) type of time- free time, b) type of activity- play or recreation, c) type of reward- intrinsic satisfaction (46). Embedded in all these elements is the notion of free time and that of gaining

---

<sup>70</sup> McLaren, MGT. (2005) Sweetie my baby.

<sup>71</sup> Campbell, C (1996), *Township families and youth identity*.

<sup>72</sup> Salo, E (2004) Respectable mothers, tough men and good daughters.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid

<sup>74</sup> Green, E et al. (1990) *Women's Leisure: What Leisure?* Hampshire: Macmillan.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Roberts, K. (1983) *Youth and Leisure*. London: George Allan & UNWIN.

satisfaction from an activity undertaken during that time. But what happens when one has neither free time nor the means to access these satisfying things?

In the introduction of *Leisure in Urban Africa*, Zeleza<sup>76</sup> provides a detailed explanation of the different variables that condition the production and consumption of leisure, specifically in an African context, which he divides into four themes;

- Participation: patterns of involvement by participants in leisure activities (active production versus passive consumption).
- Place: locations and places
- Provision: identifying who provides the leisure activity
- Politics: leisure is a social practice, not only socially constructed but deeply imbricated with the equally constructed social divisions and hierarchies of age, gender, race and class.

Zeleza<sup>77</sup> illustrates the same dialectic by demonstrating how different aspects of society intricately condition the concept of leisure and how in turn patterns of leisure reveal and expose social meanings. The aim of this chapter is to locate women, particularly young women within the conversations around leisure and problematise the concept of leisure, mainly through the lens of feminist critiques. In addition, it aims to locate the discourse surrounding youth and leisure. Lastly, it will explore a particular aspect of ‘youth culture’, namely “club culture” as it relates to the focus of this research.

---

<sup>76</sup> Zeleza, P.T. & Veney, R.V. (2003) *Leisure in Urban African*. Eritrea: Africa World Press Inc.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid

### ***Engendered Leisure: Women's leisure, what leisure?***

According to Shaw<sup>78</sup> in *Feminist Approaches to the Study of Leisure*, gender impacts greatly on everyday experiences, including “paid work activities, family roles, and social interactions, as well as leisure activities”. It is therefore surprising that it was only in the 1980s that there emerged a critique of male-centred research of leisure. However, this has led to writings on gender and leisure. Green<sup>79</sup>, whose work although dated and set in Britain, but is still pertinent in our context, suggests that theory of women's leisure is set in social structures that shape women's experiences.

The main critique of leisure provided by feminist writers is fundamentally due to how we understand work. Shaw<sup>80</sup> explains that women's lack of leisure has become increasingly evident over the last two decades, as women have increased their participation in paid work-the labour force. Green<sup>81</sup> suggests that the problems for women in terms of leisure, is the lack of dichotomy between paid work and unpaid/care work. Women's work often does not only include paid work but extends to household work and care of children, relatives and husbands<sup>82</sup>. Why this work falls solely on the shoulders of women is touched on in Chapter Three.

Dominant notions of femininity impact considerably on women's access to leisure and also impact the kind of leisure activities, based on appropriate behaviour for men and women. The notion of the “good girl” is powerful in many communities in South Africa<sup>83</sup>. The “good girl” is subject to strict controls and monitoring by mothers and older women in their

---

<sup>78</sup> Shaw, S (2003) Feminist approaches to the study of leisure. In P.T. Zeleza & R.V. Veney (eds.) *Leisure in Urban Africa*. Eritrea: Africa World Press Inc.

<sup>79</sup> Green et al (1990) *Women's Leisure*.

<sup>80</sup> Shaw, S. (2003) Feminist approaches to the study of leisure.

<sup>81</sup> Green et al (1990) *Women's Leisure*.

<sup>82</sup> Budlender, D. (2003) *Women and men in South Africa: Five years on*. Pretoria: Stats SA

<sup>83</sup> See, Campbell, (1994), Salo, E (2004), McLaren, MGT (2005)



communities, so as to ensure that they do not shame their families by indulging in behaviour that is not appropriate for girls and young women. "Sexuality is constructed into a powerful force that divides boys and girls at leisure, patterns their interrelationships and commits them to broader gender division".<sup>84</sup> Despite these powerful societal constructs, a great deal of young women's free time is spent at parties and clubs.

### *Musical Spaces and Club Culture*

There exists a massive culture around nightclubs and discos, but surprisingly, there is little research done on this area of young people's lives. One of the only pieces of research that deals with club culture directly is provided by Thornton<sup>85</sup> who looks at young people's attitudes and ideals within English clubs. Thornton examines the clubs to unearth the cultural meanings attached to the diverse spaces within. Many of her observations can be used in a Southern African context, which makes it useful for this study. In addition to Thornton, Buckland<sup>86</sup> offers interesting insights into club spaces and, although the focus is on experiences within "queer" club spaces, comparisons can be drawn between those spaces and heterosexual spaces.

According to Thornton<sup>87</sup>, crowds congregate on the basis of their shared taste in music, their consumption of common media and their preference for people with similar tastes to themselves, because of this, going out dancing leads to the crossing of race, ethnicity, class, gender and sexuality boundaries, not of age. However, based on South Africa's history of strict racial separation, these boundary crossings might be slightly more complex. One of the main attractions to clubbing is that the patrons are allowed to indulge in "adult" activities,

---

<sup>84</sup> Roberts, K. (1983) *Youth and Leisure*.

<sup>85</sup> Thornton, S. (1995) *Club cultures: Music, Media and Sub-Cultural Capital*. Oxford: Polity Press.

<sup>86</sup> Buckland, F (2002). *Impossible Dance: Club Culture and Queer World-Making*. Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

such as flirtation, sex, drink and drugs. In addition, they are able to explore cultural norms, like music and clothing<sup>88</sup>. An interesting insight that this research reveals is the feeling of liberation and power that young women experience within these club spaces, especially with regard to contemporary dancing. Furthermore, the study revealed that more young women go out dancing, than young men<sup>89</sup>. Interestingly, young men are 10 times more likely to attend sporting events, twice as likely to attend live music and more inclined to see a film than go out clubbing. In fact, dancing is the only leisure activity, out of the home, that young women engage in more often than men<sup>90</sup>.

This gender dynamic speaks to the meanings that women attach to these spaces and the obvious pleasurable aspects that they desire to experience. According to Buckland<sup>91</sup>, clubs operate “within economies of desirability based on ideals of beauty, status, race, class, gender, sexuality and class”.<sup>92</sup> In this regard the body is a powerful carrier in which these messages of desirability are portrayed to other people within the space. Dance clubs are seen as places to be “fabulous”, where people are encouraged to fashion themselves and to realise their “imaginative possibilities” through dress, social interactions and dance.<sup>93</sup> Dancing is a flexible sphere of social activity that reveals meaning and understanding of the context and space in which it is created. The messages portrayed through dancing are often seen as “a vertical expression of horizontal desire”.<sup>94</sup> This then speaks to the gendered interactions within heterosexual space and questions the impact and significance of dance in the interactions that occur in clubs.

---

<sup>88</sup> Thornton, S. (1995) *Club cultures*.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

<sup>91</sup> Buckland, F. (2002) *Impossible Dance*.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid 4

<sup>93</sup> Ibid 36

<sup>94</sup> Ibid 112

According to Hanna<sup>95</sup>, because sexuality and dance share the same body, feelings and ideas about sexuality and sex roles can take shape in dance. Although this study focuses on performance dance, it can be used to explain the meanings attached to dance in other contexts, such as clubs. Hanna views dance as highly sensual and sexual, and argues that dance displays one's sexual appeal, provides stimulating foreplay and/or fantasy and can be a communication that leads to romantic or sexual activity<sup>96</sup>. Therefore, dance carries with it, through the body's movement, displays of desirability and attractiveness.

Along with dance, alcohol is a major activity in club spaces. Thornton's study revealed that in the UK alcohol was the most widely used intoxicant of club culture, and to a lesser degree drugs, for example cocaine. Unfortunately, there has been little research done on the meaning of alcohol in club spaces, especially women's use of alcohol. Traditionally, drinking and smoking has been perceived as incompatible with the female gender, therefore making many women abstain from these activities in public<sup>97</sup>. Generally, alcohol studies have dealt with alcohol consumption as problematic or focussed on preventative measures, thereby ignoring the social and cultural meanings attached to alcohol consumption. This is especially the case with regard to women's alcohol use. According to Gefou-Madianou, there is a belief that "women cook, men drink"<sup>98</sup>. However, as Gefou-Madianou reveals, there exists a long history of women's alcohol use in many cultures and contexts around the world. Furthermore, the study looks at the intricate and complex meanings attached to the use of alcohol by women in these different contexts. "The consumption of specific drinks, with specific companions, at specific places, and the historically specific moment, encompasses issues

---

<sup>95</sup> Hanna, J.L. (1988) *Dance, Sex and Gender: Signs of Identity, Dominance, Defiance and Desire*.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid.

<sup>97</sup> Gefou- Madianou (1992) *Alcohol, Gender and Culture*. London: Routledge.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

pertaining to the situational and contextualised social construction of selves and sentiments. I regard these drinking practices as sites of resistance enacted by women against the established ideas about female gender, sexuality and pleasure.”<sup>99</sup>

It is also important to note the historical significance of alcohol within black communities in South Africa. Mager<sup>100</sup> looks at how alcohol was understood and utilised by black South Africans during the second half of the twentieth century and her research illustrates the excessive amounts of alcohol consumed at that time, particularly by migrant labourers away from their homes and families in drinking compounds set up for these labourers. These beerhalls were a place to forget the stress and alienation rather than for sociability and the building of meaningful relationships<sup>101</sup>. These places where excessive drinking took place, were spaces in which particular meanings of masculinity were constructed, spaces that were loaded with masculine bravado and where the displays of macho behaviour were not judged- in fact they were encouraged and respected<sup>102</sup>. According to Mager, in the 1960s, men living with their families drank less alcohol than migrant labourers; yet, there was still a general increase in the amount of alcohol consumed, even by family men. In the late 1960s, 22% of urban African men and 10% of urban African women were drinking at least 25 drinks per week<sup>103</sup>. Women’s excessive use of alcohol was perceived to jeopardize the family and the household, as their drinking occurred within the domestic domain of the home, where women, due to the gender division of labour, were responsible for looking after children and the home. Therefore, the effects of their drinking were felt even more.

---

<sup>99</sup> Papagaroufali, E. (1992). Uses of alcohol among women; Games of resistance, power and pleasure. In D. Gefou-Madianou (ed.) *Alcohol, Gender and Culture*; 48

<sup>100</sup> Mager, A. (2003). ‘White liquor hits black livers’ Meanings of excessive liquor consumption in South Africa in the second half of the twentieth century. *Social Science and Medicine*, 59;4, 735-751.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid

<sup>102</sup> Ibid

<sup>103</sup> Ibid

During this time, different forms of drinking culture emerged, such as the kind represented in *Drum* magazine<sup>104</sup>, where urbanised men and women downed spirits and gulped beers by the caseload with sophisticated abandon to the music of the Manhattan Brothers, Dolly Rathebe and Miriam Makeba and the Skylarks. Alcohol was also used as a marker of class, where 'European' liquor, high in alcohol content, was a status symbol and a means of social distancing. Drinking also came with the thrill and excitement of breaking Apartheid laws that inhibited the consumption of "European" liquor by blacks and in this regard, alcohol consumption had subversive significance<sup>105</sup>.

Mager<sup>106</sup> describes how as opposed to the glamorisation of alcohol generally among urban black communities, the mid-1980s saw the commencement of a negative and critical attitude to drinking on the part of the establishment and it was viewed as a "social problem". A survey taken at the time found that nearly 73% of black men and almost 39% of black women approved of drinking every weekend to the point of intoxication<sup>107</sup>. The excessive use of alcohol had and still has negative repercussions, as it was found that drinking in informal settlements was often accompanied by violence and sexual exploitation of women. According to Mager,<sup>108</sup> children and women suffered the most from the effects of alcohol abuse in poor communities, where babies would be born with Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), children could not attend school and domestic violence was often alcohol related.<sup>109</sup>

---

<sup>104</sup> *Drum* magazine represented the interests and culture of the new urban intelligentsia, elite, journalists and artists on the Reef and in Johannesburg, the Golden City. Many of the journalists on its staff achieved fame as writers in their own right, such as Ezekial Mphahlele, Nat Nakasa, Can Themba, Louis Nkosi and Bloke Modisane.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid

<sup>106</sup> Mager, A. (2003) 'White liquor hits black livers'

<sup>107</sup> Rocha-Silva (1989) in Mager, A (2003) 'White liquor hits black livers'

<sup>108</sup> Mager, A. (2003) 'White liquor hits black livers'

<sup>109</sup> Ibid

It would appear that this legacy of alcohol use and abuse still lives on, not only in poor black communities but also throughout South Africa. Carpenter<sup>110</sup> explores the dangers of alcohol abuse by looking at the relationship between alcohol use and risky sexual behaviour. It found that alcohol use cause youth to be riskier with respect to sexual behaviour, as some studies have shown that alcohol lowers one's social inhibitions, causing people to partake in behaviours they would otherwise abstain from<sup>111</sup>. Rocha-Silva et al<sup>112</sup> offer a detailed exploration of alcohol use within black communities and look at young people between the ages of 10 years and 21 years in 1994. The study reveals that 42,5% of the respondents reported that they had had an alcoholic drink some time in their lives. Of this number, 79,9% admitted to current drinking<sup>113</sup>. It was found that drinkers tended to be in the 18-21 year age group, with men being most common. Drinking tended to occur at festivities and gatherings, such as birthdays, weddings, parties and the unveiling of tombstones<sup>114</sup>. Interestingly, it was found that women were more likely to drink if they had a boyfriend or husband. There is evidence to suggest that young women drinkers tended to partake in this activity in private spaces, such as their home; whereas, young men tended to go out to clubs or discotheques<sup>115</sup>. Reasons for drinking were that it was mood changing and it brought fun and enjoyment. However, similarly to Carpenter, Rocha-Silva et al, found a link between alcohol use and risky behaviour, such as unprotected sex, leading to contraction and transmission of HIV<sup>116</sup>.

---

<sup>110</sup> Carpenter, C. (2005) Youth alcohol use and risky sexual behaviour: Evidence from underage drunk driving laws. *Journal of Health Economics*, 24, 3. 613-628.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid

<sup>112</sup> Rocha-Silva, L, de Miranda, S & Erasmus, R. (1996) *Alcohol, tobacco and other drug use among black youth*. Pretoria: HSRC Publishers

<sup>113</sup> Ibid

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid

In addition to the cultural and social meanings attached to alcohol consumption, which is seemingly a pleasurable experience, is the historical trajectory where alcohol has had particular significance for black South Africans. This was been so predominantly during the Apartheid period, however its effects can still be seen today along with the real dangers associated with frequent and excessive alcohol use, which is so pervasive in South African society generally. Social activities, which include alcohol consumption of alcohol, are inundated with meanings of femininity and masculinity, in terms of what is considered acceptable feminine behaviour and what is expected of men. Where social activities occur, are also spaces in which young women and men can explore romantic and sexual interests that are otherwise impossible in other spaces.

### *Female Sexuality: Discourses of Silence and Danger*

*“Sexuality is a central aspect of being human throughout life and that encompasses sex, gender, identities, and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction, and it experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviour, practices, roles and relationships”.*<sup>117</sup>

### ***Watchful Mothers and Silent Daughters: Young Black Women’s Sexuality***

The relationship between mother and daughter is powerful in the construction of femininity and understandings of sexuality<sup>118</sup>. It is therefore necessary to look at this relationship in order to understand young women’s sexuality. According to McFadden<sup>119</sup> African mothers are taught to be on the look out for signs of sexual stimulation, which is promptly controlled through threats and beatings and young girls are taught that there is great

<sup>117</sup> Izugbara, C. (2005);13 Patriarchal ideology and the discourses of sexuality in Nigeria. In *Socialisation and Sexuality Discourse in Nigeria*. Understanding Human Sexuality Seminar Series, 2. Lagos: ARSRC.

<sup>118</sup> Salo, E. (2004) Respectable mothers, tough men and good daughters.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid

<sup>119</sup> McFadden, P (2004) Sexual Pleasure as feminist choice. *Feminist Africa: Changing Culture*, 2.

value in becoming a mother but there is little mention about sex for pleasure, only sex for reproduction. Moreover, in many ways girls are taught to fear their genitalia; they are not to be exposed, girls should close their legs, they should wash it to avoid smells, as this is what 'good girls' do<sup>120</sup>. Aside from these negative messages about the female body, there is little else discussed, and women's sexuality is clouded in secrecy, silence and taboo.

### *Discourses of Silence*

According to a study done by Lesch and Kruger<sup>121</sup>, "Mothers, Daughters and Sexual Agency", the theme of silence emerged and was powerful in the way young women negotiated their sexuality in relation to their mothers, peers and sexual partners. With regard to their mothers, it was found that the young women feel that by deceiving them they are able to avoid destabilising their relationships with their mothers. The young women fear the responses of their mothers, especially with regard to "inappropriate sex" e.g. felatio, anal sex and masturbation. The silence between mother and daughter means that young women are often not prepared for sex; emotionally, physically and psychologically, and therefore often do not have/use contraception<sup>122</sup>. In addition, there is often silence with regard to sexuality between peers. According to a study by Wood et al<sup>123</sup>, talking about sex is seen as sinful, indecent and sluttish and young women are be labelled *ndlavini* (loose), if they talk about sex, or show any desire. The young women often do not communicate with their sexual partners about sex. Instead, they are often forced to have sex with the young men; they are raped<sup>124</sup>. As they were not prepared for sex, they experience a great deal of pain due to the "dry sex".

---

<sup>120</sup> Ibid

<sup>121</sup> Lesch, & Kruger (2005) Mothers, daughters and sexual agency in one low-income South African community. *Social Science and Medicine*, 61;5, 1072-1082

<sup>122</sup> Ibid

<sup>123</sup> Wood, K., Moforah, F. & Jewkes, R (1998) "He forced me to love him" Putting violence on adolescent sexual health agendas. *Social Science and Medicine*, 47;2, 233-242.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid



However, the young women dare not speak of their discomfort to their “partners,” let alone dare to discuss condom use. The young men the young women were sexually involved with often used violence from the first sexual act and throughout their “relationship”.

### *Discourse of Danger*

A powerful message that is drilled into young women is that sex is dangerous and in many ways, for these young women sex *is* very dangerous. However, the message of danger is used to instil the fear of sex, and attempts to deter young women from having sex. Instead, it enforces the silence around sexuality. The danger of sexual relationships comes in the form of physical and sexual coercion and violence/rape, no condom use leading to STIs, HIV infection and early pregnancy.

According to Wood et al<sup>125</sup>, on average, girls have their first sexual encounter at 13 or 14 years old and usually with older male partners. For these girls, the first sexual experience is a painful shock, as they are not prepared for it. Often they are coerced into going home with the man: to drink alcohol, chat or do his ironing. Once at his house, he demands sex with commands such as, “undress”, “lie on the bed” and “open your legs”<sup>126</sup>.

*They find you on the street and they force you to go home with them so that they can have sex with you. It is rape but we don't call it rape because they are our boyfriends.*<sup>127</sup>

If the young women refuse or resist in anyway, it was reported that the man locks the door and use violence, usually punching with fists. Violence continues throughout sexual

---

<sup>125</sup> Ibid

<sup>126</sup> Ibid

<sup>127</sup> MacPhail et al. (2001) “I think condoms are good, but, aai, I hate those things”: Condom use among adolescent and young people in a Southern African township. *Social Science and Medicine*, 52; 11. 1613-1627.

interactions. If a woman is seen as being “loose” she is “punished”, often by being gang raped.

In addition to the violent nature of young women’s sexual interactions, there is the health risk involved in not using any protection. A study by MacPhail and Campbell<sup>128</sup> called “I think condoms are good but, aai, I hate those things”, was carried out in Khutsong, which is a township in the North West province and looked at condom use and attitudes to condoms. The HIV prevalence in the age group 18-21 years for men was 22.4% as compared to 58% for women! According to this study, the negative attitude to condom use has been internalised and is linked to inarticulate and vague notions of masculinity. The young men feel pressure to have sex, even when they do not want to, and not use a condom because it is not a “manly” thing to do. To be considered a ‘man’ one also has to have multiple sexual partners. In addition, it was not respectable for a young woman to carry condoms. Therefore, the risk of contracting STIs, HIV and/or getting pregnant is very high. These studies have all shown how the gender power dynamics play out in sexual experiences and place women in risky and dangerous positions.

Many young women in Langa township and other places in South Africa experience similar confusion caused by the mixed messages they receive. This research intends to explore the femininity that allows them to explore their sexuality and to learn how they negotiate their sexual relationships and interactions. As illustrated in the above studies, there tends to be a focus on the negative sexual experiences of black women. However, it is also important to note that very often, young women do experience pleasure and actively seek out romantic and

---

<sup>128</sup> Ibid

sexual relationships. The aim of this study is to ensure that both sides of young women's sexual experiences are explored and understood. As Charmaine Pereira<sup>129</sup> argues, researchers tend to generalise the sexual experiences of women, particularly African women, and one should be wary of this. History, age, location, ethnicity, language, culture, religion, race and class, interact to construct a particular notion of sexuality within a particular context. Moreover, constructions of sexuality change across time and space. How have these constructions changed in the different contexts of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Africa? Pereira argues that the notion of sex being "filthy" and "dirty" was introduced into Africa by colonialism through Christianity<sup>130</sup>. She rightly points out that there are African cultures and societies where sex is seen as pleasurable, such as in Islam where denial of sexual satisfaction is grounds for a divorce. Therefore, not all women are sexually repressed as many researchers suggest and it is part of the aim of this study to explore the pleasurable experiences, as well as the dangerous, that young women in Langa experience.

---

<sup>129</sup> Pereira, C. (2003) Where angels fear to tread? Some thoughts on P. Macfadden's "Sexual Pleasure as feminist choice". *Feminist Africa: Changing Cultures*, 2.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid

## CHAPTER 2

### *Methodology*

Exploring issues of identity is a complex task requiring numerous research approaches that will ensure a holistic and detailed gathering of experiences, beliefs and social practices. In this case the exploration is further inhibited by the marginality of the space to which the young women informants belong. This research is grounded in a feminist discourse that views the experiences of marginalized people, especially women, as misrepresented and misunderstood. It is with this belief that this research has been undertaken.

This chapter provides a detailed in-depth description of the aim of this research process that will set the foundation for the following chapters that deal with the findings of the research. Moreover, it explores the theoretical grounding that relates to this research by focusing on feminist epistemology and discussions around positionality. Understanding the identity of the researcher is key in this process as it reveals how the researcher impacts on and influences the development of the research. In arguing that objective research is difficult to achieve and therefore the impact of the researchers' subjectivities is hugely influential, it is useful to reflect upon my own identity and how this might have influenced informants' interactions with me as well as their responses in interviews. In addition to this discussion of positionality, this chapter will critically reflect on the research methods I used. Finally I will also discuss the ethical issues that arose during the course of the research.

### *Research Objectives*

The initial idea behind this research came from research carried out by myself, in 2005. The research aimed to explore how young black women's gender identity and

constructions of femininity was impacted on and influenced by the “culture of music”. The term “culture of music” was used, in this instance, to signify all the different elements of music, such as the artists, songs and music videos. The decision to focus on music stemmed from my own interest and research background in music. In addition, literature suggested that music was powerful in the lives of young people in South Africa.

The research, in 2005, was carried out in Langa township with five young women between the ages of 16 and 19 years old. As access was secured into Langa by an arrangement with the principal of the local high school, all the young women attended Langa High school. After many initial setbacks with regard to the effectiveness of conventional research when dealing with language and age differences, and the effective use of theatre games as a research method, the research revealed interesting insights. The “culture of music” influences how young women behave in different places. Revealed was the powerful discourse of the “good girl” which was reinforced by gospel music and requires that young women remain within home, abstained from drinking, smoking and sexual activities. The amount of responsibilities these young women have in the household meant that they had little to no free time.

However, many of the women, through various means, are able to negotiate access to places considered to not be respectable, many often going to parties, taverns and clubs. Within these spaces, the young women are required to behave in a different manner, often dictated by “the culture of music”. In the research this was termed ‘hidden femininity’ as it often occurs in clubs and parties away from the controlling and policing gaze of the young women’s mothers and guardians. The manner in which the young women are able to shift their behaviour between spaces aroused an interest, as it pointed to the fluidity of femininity and suggested that femininity is merely a performance that moulds itself based on the expectations

within that space. In addition, nightclub spaces being under-researched yet such a major aspect of youth culture, reveal a great deal about young people's beliefs and social practices.

Therefore, this current research explores club cultures more deeply, with particular interest in the performance of femininity through the body. The subversive nature of hidden femininity raises many questions around women's agency and changing nature of gender dynamics and interactions. It is subversive in the sense that the club space and the activities that take place within clubs have traditionally been seen as male domain. Consequently, the research focuses on three main areas of inquiry- appearance, dance and alcohol consumption. In as much as the club experience is a pleasurable one and women are able to escape the various pressures in their everyday lives, there also exists potential for danger. This research set out to understand the experiences of pleasure and danger, and the manner in which young women negotiate the two- in all aspects of their lives.

The study of femininity and gender identity requires that one explores all aspects of the young women's identity and places their experiences in their specific context, as was partly done in Chapter One. It also entails grounding the research firmly in an epistemological framework that sees the value of exploring and uncovering the voices of marginalized people's experiences, especially young black women. Therefore, it is important to outline the main aspects within a feminist epistemological perspective.

### *Feminist Epistemology: Methodological Approaches*

Feminist epistemology addresses issues of knowledge production, such as who can be a knower<sup>131</sup>. According to many feminist thinkers, especially on the African continent, traditional epistemologies systematically exclude the possibility that women can be

---

<sup>131</sup> Harding, S. (1987) Introduction: Is there a feminist method? In S. Harding (ed) *Feminism and Methodology*. Bloomington: Open University Press.

“knowers” and therefore knowledge produced tends to be male-biased<sup>132</sup>. Not only are women excluded from knowledge production but they are also missing in the knowledge produced. According to Narayan<sup>133</sup>, women’s experiences have been ignored or misrepresented by dominant and mainstream discourses. This is where feminist epistemology fits in. Feminist epistemology raises questions about who is researching whom, what is being researched and how the research is undertaken. Furthermore, the fundamental thesis of feminist epistemology is that “our location as women makes it possible for us to perceive and understand different aspects of both the world and human activities in ways that challenge the male bias of existing perspectives”<sup>134</sup>. The location Narayan<sup>135</sup> speaks of is our embodiments as members of a specific class, gender and race, as well as our historical contexts, which play significant roles in our perspective on the world. But does this mean that as a woman I understand the experiences of *all* oppressed groups and can therefore produce knowledge about them? Not necessarily. However, taking gender seriously not only means taking all aspects of one’s being into account by asking different questions, in different ways, for different reasons. Feminist epistemology provides the theoretical framework in which researchers who take gender seriously, operate. Gender analysis provides the practical tools and guidelines to knowledge production which is gender sensitive.

The analysis and understanding of femininities, particularly in this context are key in feminist theories. Understanding the experiences and lived realities of young black women who exist on the periphery of Cape Town, and represent a fairly marginalized group of

---

<sup>132</sup> See Imam (1997), Harding (1987), Narayan (1989)

<sup>133</sup> Narayan U. (1989) The project of feminist epistemology: Perspective from a non-Western woman. In A. Jagger & S. Bordo (eds) *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist reconstructions of being and knowing*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid

<sup>135</sup> Ibid

women, is crucial in feminist theory. Although feminist theories and theorists have attempted to fill the gap in literature, which ignores, misrepresents or underplays the histories and experiences of women, the stories of these young women, in this research, still need to be heard, as they reveal fundamental knowledge about femininity and womanhood. And it is this knowledge that lays the foundation for the unravelling and overturning of dominant gender ideologies that disempower women and try to deny them control. This research aims to expose both sides of the coin- the power and agency of these young women as well as the suppression and controls they negotiate day after day.

### *Gaining Access: Langa and the Women*

The commencement of fieldwork research is always daunting as one is never completely confident that everything will go according to plan. My entrance into Langa was an interesting one- somewhat of a journey. Therefore, the process of gaining access into Langa and meeting the young women with whom I worked is presented as a narrative, a story of the journey into the unknown space of fieldwork research. It also illustrates the complexity and difficulties encountered when conducting this kind of research as one is working with real people, with lives of their own, where one often feels like a nuisance. It is often assumed that working in a township means easy access to the people within it. This may be due to the many stereotypes about township inhabitants, such as being unemployed or lazy. However, the apparently 'easy access' proved more difficult than expected and I found myself relying on snowball sampling to meet women to work with. The young women I worked with were dynamic, interesting and hardworking in whatever they did. This meant that I could not always rely on their availability. This frequently led to missed meetings, cancelled appointments and general frustration, on my part. However, it is through these experiences



that one is able to carry out research and more importantly is given insight into the lives of the informants. In many cases, one is invited into the inner folds of family and friends- as I was. Those experiences are presented here<sup>136</sup>.

Having worked in Langa during the year before, I was more familiar with the space geographically, as a result I was more comfortable and confident there and I had a sense of the lifestyle and lived experiences of Langa residents. I entered this research with the belief that meeting young women to participate would be easier than during my previous experience where my research partner and I struggled for many months. Alas, this was not the case.

At the onset of my research, I intended to work with Mazuba Haanyama, a fellow-student and colleague and someone I had worked with in Langa previously. From our previous research<sup>137</sup> we had formed social networks and connections that we had intended to use when embarking on research for this dissertation. Initially, this seemed successful as we managed to locate one of the young women who fit our criteria and who was willing to work with us and introduce us to more women of the same age group<sup>138</sup>. Mazuba and I met Thandi<sup>139</sup> one Friday afternoon while doing our research in Langa last year. She lived right next door to *Mnqobonqobo*, a local hangout for young high-school people in Langa. We both remembered her and how friendly she had been to us so we decided to locate her so as to include her in our research. In order to do this, we asked the young women whom we had worked with the previous year, to set up a meeting for us. At this meeting we explained what our research entailed and Thandi seemed willing and eager to help. She also promised to introduce us to more women of her age.

---

<sup>136</sup> Please see Appendix A for information on informants

<sup>137</sup> See Haanyama, H (2005) and McLaren, MGT (2005).

<sup>138</sup> The sample will be described in more details further in the chapter. Please note that pseudonyms will be used through the entire dissertation.

<sup>139</sup> The names of the research participants has been changed as was agreed at the onset of my research.

Thandi introduced us to two more women, her sister Lindiwe and her friend Zinzi. We were able to meet with all three on one occasion and conducted an informal focus group interview with them in a restaurant, Mojitos, on Long Street. However, these women being older meant that they had many responsibilities. All three are formally employed and Thandi and Zinzi have children, making it difficult to gather them together to conduct further focus groups. We were able to work with Lindiwe again, perhaps because she was neither married<sup>4</sup> nor had children, unlike the other two women.

This led me to explore alternative options in terms of meeting women in Langa, making use of colleagues and friends that were able to introduce me to different women in Langa. I met Nomhle through an anthropology student from a foreign university, doing research on the Cape Flats who participated in meetings held by my colleagues and me. I phoned Nomhle and explained my research to her and inquired whether she was interested in working with me. She agreed. Unfortunately, she was unable to introduce me to any other women but I was able to work with her throughout my research process and have since established a friendship with her.

At this stage in the research, I decided that it would be more beneficial for both Mazuba and I to conduct our fieldwork separately, the reason being that due to our different schedules and topics, we were unable to benefit fully from the time we spent in Langa. I felt that I could achieve more if I was able to locate and meet with women on my own. This meant that I would no longer have support or company when in Langa nor would have transport. However, I feel that this choice only contributed to strengthening me as a researcher in a somewhat foreign place. Therefore, I relied on my supervisor's generosity and utilised her car

for transport to and from Langa. Once in a while I would take a friend or a fellow researcher but the most of the time I went into Langa and located the remaining women by myself.

Through a family friend I met cousins, Ayanda and Ntombi, at a dinner we were all invited to and they both became informants for my research. Ayanda is a first-year student studying law. This meant that it was sometimes difficult to schedule meetings as she was very busy. Despite this, I was able to work with her. At the time I was doing my research, Ntombi was in the early stages of starting a company. I was able to meet with her on a number of occasions. In addition, Ntombi was able to set up meetings for me with two more women in Langa.

Ntombi had scheduled meetings with both Dudu and her friend for the same afternoon. Unfortunately, I never got to meet Dudu's friend as she was not home when we went round. I was able to meet with Dudu and conduct an interview with her in her home down the street from Ntombi- and interestingly a few houses down from the late Brenda Fassie's home.

Overall, I managed to locate a number of women, from very diverse backgrounds and experience in terms of class, age, education and location within Langa. The number of women I worked with was different at any given time. I worked with 7 women throughout the research process. Their ages ranged from 19years old to 26 years old. All of the women, except for one, had matriculated<sup>140</sup>. Four women were currently employed with one seeking employment. Only one woman was enrolled in university, while another had finished her matriculation exams, but whose family could not afford to send her to technikon. The young women interesting and diverse women and it was an honour to work with them.<sup>141</sup>

---

<sup>140</sup> She was currently attending night-school in order to pass the subjects she had failed the previous year.

<sup>141</sup> See Appendix A for table of informants

## Methods

### ***Qualitative vs. Quantitative Research: A Feminist Approach***

A qualitative approach, as defined by Babbie and Mouton, is research that takes its departure point from the insider perspective of the social actors, with its main goal being to describe and understand<sup>142</sup>. Unlike quantitative research, which is concerned with creating reliable, objective numbers out of data, qualitative research acknowledges that it is not completely objective and it is empirical<sup>143</sup>. Feminist approaches to research exist on a spectrum where some, such as Oakley<sup>144</sup>, do not claim to be objective and furthermore consider that there is no such thing as objective research. Therefore, it places an emphasis on positionality. Others, such as Bhavnani<sup>145</sup>, believe that positionality assists objectivity by making the conditions of data-gathering, with regard to facility and constraints, more transparent. According to Bhavnani, positionality relates to where the researcher is located in a context, in terms of race, class, ethnicity, education and language<sup>146</sup>. This awareness is absent in most mainstream knowledge production. It takes into account the role of the researcher as she enters the research space with her own identity as well her own preconceptions. So, one starts off with the researcher formulating the questions she wishes to explore and, from there, following procedures to find the best methods for acquiring the knowledge she desires. Within the qualitative approach there are a number of different methods but for reliability often the idea of triangulation (using many methods) is encouraged. Examples of these different methods are- interviews, observations, case studies, life histories and focus group interviews.

---

<sup>142</sup> Babbie, E and Mouton, J. (2001) *The practice of social research*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.

<sup>143</sup> Neuman, W.L. (1997) Qualitative research design Ch 13. In *Social Research Methods* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon

<sup>144</sup> Oakley, A. (2000) *Experiment in knowing gender and method in the social sciences*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

<sup>145</sup> Bhavnani, K. (1994) Tracing the contours: Feminist research and feminist objectivity. In H.Ashar & M. Taylor (eds.) *The dynamics of "race" and gender: Some feminist interventions*. London: Taylor & Francis.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid

All of these are equally useful and important. In feminist research- or research that takes gender seriously- experiences are valued and these methods are used to explore them.<sup>147</sup>.

Quantitative methods encourage researchers to have a large sample size as this will increase the reliability- the extent that research results can be generalised to a population- of the knowledge produced<sup>148</sup>. However, how can one generalise to a population when one does not acknowledge the differences in experience and context? In this regard, quantitative research that does not take into account diversity within the sample or change over time, lends itself to knowledge production that is lacking in these finer details. Often, quantitative research does not interrogate the difference in results or the causes of the phenomena- which would not be useful for this research. On the other hand, gender research uses women's experiences to understand their wants and needs in a specific context<sup>149</sup>. My intention with this research is not to generalise the experiences of all young black women in South Africa as I am conscious of how the context and identity of the young women impacts on their experiences. With this in mind, I planned my research methods appropriately drawing on qualitative methods for data collection.

### ***Participant Observation***

My intention at the onset of my research was to 'hang-out' with the young women in spaces that I felt would be most beneficial to the exploration of 'hidden' or 'subversive' femininities- these places being nightclubs, bars and taverns- while concurrently observing them in their day-to-day lives. I felt that this would reveal the ways in which young women negotiate these different spaces and shed some light on the fluid and shifting nature of

---

<sup>147</sup> Reinharz, S. (1992) Feminist Action Research. Chp 10. In *Feminist Methods in social research*. Londo

<sup>148</sup> Myers, 2000

<sup>149</sup> Harding, S. (1987) Is there a feminist method?

identity, particularly gender identity. In addition, I felt I could also familiarise myself more with Langa as a complex social space.

Although I was unable to go to these spaces with the young women as often as I would have liked, I did observe behaviour in places which I knew the young women frequented, on my own. There were a number of places that were popular with the young women<sup>150</sup>. These also happened to be spaces where I myself enjoy going to and so was able to incorporate my research into my social activities, which made the process easier, especially in terms of transport.

I was also able to spend time in the homes of some of the young women, which was a vastly different experience from my previous work in Langa. The majority of the interviews took place in the young women's houses- which meant that I not only observed the homes in which the young women lived but I also met their families thus giving me a more in-depth understanding and insight into the lives of the young women. Moreover, I could strengthen my ties with different people in Langa thus deepening the research process and enriching the information obtained. On the other hand, there were a number of disadvantages to being so close and involved in the lives of the young women. On a number of occasions I was asked to drive people on their errands, which consumes time and petrol but at the same time means that they are able to gain something from the interaction, making it more of an equal transaction. However, I encountered a number of conflicts when I became involved in family politics<sup>151</sup> where I was torn between taking the ethical road as a researcher while at the same wanting to do what I believed to be the best thing. The specific incident involved one of the young

---

<sup>150</sup> Pata Pata, formerly Snap, was one of the more popular clubs, as well as Joburg's and Marvel, all in town.

<sup>151</sup> This will be explored further in the dissertation as it forms a significant part of my research.

women who had become pregnant during the time I worked with her<sup>152</sup>. This brought about a conflict within myself, as a researcher, who had formed personal ties with people, but who still had to analyse and report on the research for this dissertation. I explore this conflict later in this chapter when I discuss the ethical issues at greater length.

### *Journals*

The journals were intended to provide an alternative space for the young women to record and share their experiences. Despite the failure of the journals as a reliable and useful research method for my honours project, I gave journals to three of the young women: Nomhle, Ntombi and Ayanda. The failure of the journals with the younger women in my previous research was seen as being due to language barriers and the age of the participants. Being of school going age, the journals might have been perceived as a chore or activity resembling homework. However, the current research was undertaken with older women, with whom language was not an obstacle and who were no longer in school.

The young women were asked to write about their experiences and observations when they went out to parties or clubs. In addition, they were encouraged to write about their daily experiences. Unfortunately, this means of data collection did not fully live up to expectations. Of the three journals given out, only one was used. The reasons given by the young women for not making use of the journals centred on free time. Both women had busy schedules, one as a student and the other as an entrepreneur in the early stages of a business. Therefore, they were not able to write in the journals.

Auspiciously, the young woman who did utilise the journal, went way beyond the expectations set for this method. At the end of my fieldwork I was handed back a book full of thoughts, feeling, experiences, pictures, songs and photographs. Clearly, she had put an

---

<sup>152</sup> See page 59

immense amount of time and effort into the journal. From reading her journal I was able to share in these experiences and understand the finer layers of her reality. I understand the differences to be related to access to free time. Nomhle was currently unemployed, therefore having a great deal of free time. In addition, her ambition is to become a journalist, for that reason she enjoyed writing in the journal and was eager to hear my feedback. The success of the journals as a research method is dependant on the time the participants have access to.

### *Cameras*

This method had proved useful and successful during my honours project, mainly due to the activities that followed with the photographs. I gave out four disposable cameras to Ntombi, Ayanda, Nomhle and Lindiwe. The young women were instructed to take photographs of whatever they thought was important in their lives and whenever they went out partying or clubbing. The young women seemed quite excited by with this exercise. However, similarly to the journals, the cameras had varying levels of success. The cameras were intended to serve as a means for the participants to introduce and share aspects of their lives that they had control over.

I delivered the cameras to Nomhle and Lindiwe through relatives at their houses. Neither of the two had ever used a disposable camera before, so I gave instructions over the phone. However, since I was unable to demonstrate to them how to use the cameras, particularly the flash function, many of the photographs were taken after dark without a flash, thus being of no use. Fortunately, the few photographs that were developed were useful and showed an interesting side to the young women- as were the photographs taken by Ntombi.

Ntombi was very helpful and enthusiastic throughout the whole research process and eager to take pictures. She told me on a number of occasions what she had taken photographs of- hence my surprise when I realised she had only used a third of the film. Once again, issues



of free time impacted on how many photographs she could take. This was the case with Ayanda, who was unable to make use of the camera as she was preparing and writing exams at the time and was under a great deal of pressure. Unfortunately, the photograph quality was such that the photographs could not be included in this write up. Although this method was not as successful as expected, I would use cameras in future research as it provides the participant with ownership and control of what they share. In addition, the photographs act as mementos of the time spent together during the research process.

### *Focus Group Interviews*

At the outset of my research, I had envisaged focus group interviews constituting the main part of my fieldwork research. The reasoning behind was based on the experiences my research partner and I had with conventional methods of research. Owing to the age and language barriers, interviews did not yield the information we had hoped to obtain<sup>153</sup>.

Therefore, a theatrical approach was used and proved successful and beneficial to both the participants and the researchers. However, as in this case language and age were not a major factor, I had expected that conventional focus groups would be effective. This was not the case as the young women were not always available to meet in a group owing to the above-mentioned factors. In the event only two focus groups were undertaken.

Mazuba and I unsuccessfully scheduled a number of focus groups that never materialised. Often we would stand outside Thandi's door knowing that no one was inside and that we had made the trip in vain. Being used to no-shows, we would simply make another appointment. Eventually it seemed as though it might happen after all. We arrived at Thandi's place but she was not there. She informed us that she was in town waiting for a man that owed her money. We agreed to meet at the Golden Acre shopping mall. She was there with her

---

<sup>153</sup> See Haanyama, M (2005) and McLaren, MGT (2005)

sister and friend and they were willing to partake in the conversation. The focus group took place at Mojito's on Long Street. The relaxed atmosphere positively affected the conversation and everyone seemed at ease, the conversation flowed.

The second occasion was a formal focus group, which took place at Lindiwe's cousin's house. Unfortunately, not all the women who had agreed to be there were able to make it. In any case, it went on as planned and turned out to be a fun and interesting discussion. However, after this focus group we were unable to group the women together again, mainly due to clashing schedules and I decided to pursue an individualistic approach in order to work with the women one by one, at their convenience.

An interesting aspect of these two focus groups that were held was the contrast between the first informal focus group, which took place in the restaurant and the formal group which took place in Lindiwe's cousin's home. The dynamics were decidedly different for a number of reasons. Firstly, the interview that took place in the restaurant was a lot more relaxed. This may have been due to the alcohol consumed but also the casual atmosphere, as it was more like talking amongst friends. Secondly, the relaxed atmosphere opened up discussions in both directions, where the "researchers" were asked questions as much as the informants were. However, due to the more casual nature of the research, as researchers, we had little control over the direction of the interviews and therefore had to follow the natural course of the conversation. In addition, being in a restaurant meant that tape used to record the conversation was inaudible. The formal interviews were advantageous as the discussion could be steered in the direction intended at the outset. Furthermore, these conversations could be recorded. However, the more rigid approach meant that young women were not as comfortable and the conversation was one way.

There were positive, as well as negative aspects to both informal and formal focus groups. However, based on the nature and topic of this research, the focus group in the restaurant was more effective, as it was a similar space to the ones researched, namely club spaces. Nevertheless, the inability to gather the women together in a group meant that individual interviews became the best option.

### *Individual Interviews*

*"... interviews provide an invaluable means of generating new insights about women's experiences of themselves in their worlds. The spontaneous exchange within an interview offers possibilities of freedom and flexibility...the interview provides the opportunity [for her] to tell her own story in her own terms." <sup>154</sup>*

Semi-structured interviews were used to allow for a deeper and personal exploration of the young women's lives<sup>155</sup>. These proved to be useful in so far as the individual and unique experiences of the diverse women were captured, as well as allowing for the similarities of experience to become evident. I found this method valuable as I not only was able to ask the young women the interview questions but I was also invited into their homes. This was a vastly different experience from that of my honours project in which I was never invited to the young women's homes and even after suggesting it never met their families. In contrast, the young women I worked with for this research were very open. I was thus able to conduct formal interviews, which were planned and recorded, as well as hold impromptu discussion, which were equally effective in terms of information gathering.

All formal interviews I conducted took place in the young women's family homes or the homes of their close relatives bar one, which took place in a café in the city centre. These

---

<sup>154</sup> Anderson, K. & Jack, D. (1991) Learning to Listen: Interview techniques and analyses. In S. Gluck & D. Patai (eds) *Women's words: The feminist practice of oral history*. Routledge

<sup>155</sup> See Appendix B for interview structure

were recorded- with the consent of the participant. The more informal interviews- the impromptu discussions- were not recorded; however I took pains to ensure I took notes in my research journal soon after the discussion. In this way I was able to conduct one in-depth interview with all of the young women. In addition, follow-up interviews were done with young women that I felt could share more or had interesting insights that I wished to learn more about.

And, throughout this whole process, aspects of my identity and myself were evident in many of the choices that I made during the research- who I talked to, what I researched, where I conducted my research and how I chose to conduct the research.

### *Positionality: Personal Influence and Experience*

As discussed earlier, positionality refers to where the researcher is located in a context, in terms of race, class, ethnicity, education and language<sup>156</sup>. Positionality is also having an awareness of the power relations between researchers and the researched and the possibilities and constraints on information obtained<sup>157</sup>. This awareness is absent in most mainstream knowledge production. Spivak<sup>158</sup> speaks about reflexivity, which relates to positionality and accountability. Researchers come to the field with preconceptions that shape who they research and what questions they ask. Who the researcher is also affects the interactions between researchers and participants.

The research I have carried out is directly influenced and impacted on by my family and upbringing. My choice of study, research topic and the space in which my research would take place, were all influenced by where I come from and the spaces I have occupied.

---

<sup>156</sup> Bhavnani, K. (1994) Tracing the contours.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid

<sup>158</sup> Spivak, G. C. (1994) Can the subaltern speak? In P. Williams & L. Chrisman (eds.) *Colonial Discourse and post-colonial theory*. New York: Columbia University.

Occupying an interstitial existence means that the young women and I were able to relate on a profound level, which enriched the research and our interactions, as we are people who exist on the periphery and that do not completely fit into a space. It is this shared experience- between me and the women that I worked with- which impelled me to explore, unearth and reveal their stories.

It is essential that one understand my identity and background in order to understand my positioning in this research process. My parents are South African. My father is of Scottish descent but born and bred in South Africa. My late mother was Zulu speaking. Owing to the Apartheid regime's laws regarding mixed race marriages and relationships as well as to other factors also relating to Apartheid, my parents were forced to leave their home country. After years of exile in different places, they were able eventually to settle in Zimbabwe. I was born in England but at the time we were living in Ethiopia. Our household overflowed with different traditions and cultures, which came through in the languages spoken, the songs sung, the pictures on the walls and in what we observed and were taught.

I am the product of an atypical marriage where my parents shared nationality, language and to a large extent culture but were mixed in terms of race and religious. I have lived in different places, such as Ethiopia, the United States and Zimbabwe. Throughout my life I have always stood out, initially, mainly because of my racial identity. The majority of students in my primary and secondary school were black Shona-speaking Zimbabweans. As much as I fit in and was accepted, I was aware that my fair skin colour and longer hair set me apart from my friends, although this did not greatly influence our interactions and relationships. When I left Zimbabwe to finish high school in the United States, where my grandmother and paternal aunt reside, I was once again in the minority. Being a fair skinned

black person who had “white people” tendencies, as my black friend once called them, I once again did not completely fit in. Nevertheless, because of the strong foundation put in place while growing up, I have often been able to cross racial, class and cultural divides, thus gaining from these experiences and developing my ability to be open to new and different experiences.

I took this with me into my research. The SANPAD project, under which my research falls, required that the research be carried out on the Cape Flats. I undertook my fieldwork in Langa, a black<sup>159</sup> township, because that is where I feel most comfortable. My experience of the ‘Coloured’ community in the Western Cape has been one clouded by racist attitudes and a general unfamiliarity with language and behaviours,<sup>160</sup> which exclude me. I believe that because of my similarity with people classified as ‘Coloured’ there is the expectation that I understand Afrikaans and share similar opinions and behaviour. Instead, my language and behaviour sets me apart. On the other hand, in Langa I was perceived as different because of my similarity to people classified Coloured and therefore did not have the same expectations imposed on me. In the end, I turned out to be more similar than different, owing to our shared interests in music and my interest in speaking Xhosa, and the young women were able to relate to me better than they had initially. Although my first experience of townships in Cape Town was in Langa, while growing up, my family often went to Soweto, where my parents had close friends and many of the girls I schooled with in Zimbabwe were from townships in Harare. Therefore, Langa as a space and the young women who lived there were not altogether foreign to me. In addition, owing to the fact that both my parents spoke Zulu and I learnt Shona in Zimbabwe, I was able to understand some Xhosa.

---

<sup>159</sup> During Apartheid this would have been classified an African township.

<sup>160</sup> This is not to suggest that one can homogenize “coloured” people, however, there has been a trend in my experience which may or may not be unique to me.

My main discomfort surfaced with regard to my identity as a researcher. During the research process I befriended many of the young women, which was not the case in the research carried out for my honours project where the interactions between the young women and me were limited to research. Suddenly I was confronted with the dilemma of not having the distance between researcher and participants that I had been accustomed to and so I felt like a 'double agent'. The 'innocent' conversations we were having between friends, were recorded in a journal, to be analysed and dissected. I was comforted by the knowledge I had been upfront in my intentions and was determined to give an honest voice to the young women in Langa.

This experience revealed an aspect of research that many researchers face and struggle with, particularly feminist researchers. One is having the awareness that research can have the potential to be 'colonisation of knowledge', where researchers invade the lives of people, use them and misrepresent their experiences without sensitivity or conscience. At the same time, as a feminist researcher, one is aware of the need to produce knowledge about the hidden lives of marginalized people, especially women. This desire stems from the concerns and interests of African feminism, which seeks to give voice to African women of all generations and seeks to increase our knowledge about their lived experiences and struggles<sup>161</sup>.

### *Ethical Concerns*

In any research process there are ethical concerns that need to be acknowledged and analysed. Within this research, there were a number of incidence and situations where one had to seriously consider the ethical implications.

---

<sup>161</sup> Imam, A. (1997) Introduction to *Engendering African social sciences*. Dakar: CODESRIA

At the onset of the research relationship with the young women and throughout the research process I endeavoured to ensure that I had been clear about my research objectives and methods and that I had the consent of the young women. During all the introductions and initial meetings with the various women I clearly explained what the research entailed. Once the women were informed and had asked any questions they might have had, I asked their permission to record our conversations and use the information they shared in this dissertation. Moreover, at the beginning of every research session, I asked their consent to use a tape recorder or write down the conversation. Additionally, the young women consented to me using the photographs and information from their journals, as long as pseudonyms were used to ensure anonymity. It was agreed that all the photographs and journals would be returned to the young women at the end of the research process.

Owing to the relationships I have formed during this research process I believe that I will continue to be in regular contact with most of the women. The returning of the photographs and journals and copy of this dissertation for the young women who request it, will mark the official end to the research process but not our friendships. Incidents, like the one described below, where I shared in the intimate lives of the young women ensure that we will remain friends.

As mentioned briefly earlier, a situation arose with one of young women, Nomhle, becoming pregnant during the time I worked with her. As soon as she suspected she was pregnant she confided in me. She was adamant that she did not want to have the baby, as she is only 19 years old and had plans to go to university the following year. She also felt that it would disappoint her mother, who became a parent when she was 15 years old. She knew her



mother did not want the same thing to happen to her. She confessed that she had not any of her family members and that only one other friend and myself knew.

During this time I met Nomhle's grandmother who suspected that Nomhle was pregnant and was aware that Nomhle and I were becoming close. She asked me about Nomhle's pregnancy on a number of occasions. This was a difficult situation as, being a researcher, I had agreed that all information discussed would remain confidential and that in the dissertation names would be changed. Therefore, I felt obliged to keep Nomhle's secret. At the same time, I felt that her family deserved to know, as Nomhle was quite young, unemployed and confused. Family support might have eased her burden. I consulted my supervisor. She suggested that I merely provide Nomhle with information that would assist her in her decision-making but in no way make the decision for her.

Nomhle wanted to have an abortion. However her pregnancy was advanced, so much so that it would have been dangerous for her to go through with it. I was caught between supporting her decision and having major concerns about it. Eventually, I urged Nomhle to tell someone in her family, which she finally did. The family decided to keep the child and Nomhle gave birth in December.

This experience also brought forth the issue of trust in research relationships-where the informants share a great deal of their time and their experiences in the hope that one will portray them in an honest and positive manner. Spending that amount of time with people usually leads to a deepening of the interaction that soon progresses to a friendship. On the one hand, this is beneficial to the research as it allows access to the more personal and private parts of the young women's lives, in this way enriching the data gathered. On the other hand, as mentioned earlier, one feels that trust is being betrayed because the intimate details of their

lives, which they have shared with a friend, are exposed in a research document that analyses and dissects their thoughts and feelings. In order to safeguard against this- although the discomfort remains- one has to ensure that one's intentions are made clear from the onset of the research and that a copy of the dissertation be made available to any of the informants. In this way, one can go some way towards guaranteeing transparency and holding oneself accountable.

My relationships with many of the young women I worked will continue post-research. From this process I have met very interesting people, who welcomed me into their homes and lives. As much as they shared their stories with me, I shared mine with them. Therefore, our relationships have progressed past researcher/ informant to that of friends.

## CHAPTER 3

### *“Good Girl/ Club Girl”:*

#### *The Performance of Femininities*

This chapter will explore the concepts of normative femininity and hidden/subversive femininity that emerged from my research conducted a year ago in Langa and in the research presented here. The notions of femininity that arose out of my previous research, conducted in 2005, are what shaped my current research, as I have attempted to deepen my understanding of how femininity manifests itself as a performance that is fluid and changing depending on space. One learns what it means to be a woman by understanding what the expectations are and the accepted roles and behaviours. This acts as the foundation of their gender identity, thus affecting their interactions and experiences.

My previous research revealed that young women are able to perform different femininities, depending on what is expected of them as women in a particular space. This chapter will address two spaces where the young women I worked with spend most of their time, and in which there are particular and different expectations of their behaviour. It will address the performance of normative femininity within the home and community, whilst exploring how young women are able to access places that are perceived as unsuitable for young women, particularly clubs and parties. Hidden/subversive femininities will be defined in relation to these ‘forbidden’ spaces. The notions of hidden/subversive femininities as being liberating and rebellious will be problematised.

## *The 'Good Girl': The Policing of Respectability and Domesticity*

*"Chores, yes I do, like with helping to clean up the house, the cooking we take turns, like me and my grandmother. To cook today it's me, tomorrow it's her, that and even the dishes...I was in Standard 3, that's when I started cleaning, like they gave me a little chore cleaning the toilet..." ~Dudu*

*"I get stressed...she [mother] complains once a month 'I do everything. You don't help out but you're a girl!' And I'm like, there's a boy too!"  
~Ntombi*

Ayanda, who lives at home with both parents and her older brother, admits that she has more chores around the house than the male members of the family. Her chores include cleaning her room, the bathroom, the kitchen, as well as cooking and doing laundry. She attributes the amount of work she is responsible for to her being a woman; she feels that it is her place in the household to contribute more than the men. In addition to her responsibilities around the house, her parents are strict and watchful over her, in terms of where she goes and whom she befriends, unlike her brother who enjoys more freedom to go out and do as he pleases. In spite of her parents' watchfulness Ayanda finds ways to go out and have fun, ways that will not shatter her 'good girl' image.

Dudu lives in a house of women- herself, her mother and her grandmother. She started helping out around the house around the age of 10 years, with minor chores. In her household, chores are rotated and shared equally between the three women. Although she admits that women have more responsibilities around the house, she believes that men are changing as many of her male-friends help out around their households. Despite this, she has particular

notions of what a woman should be like in the home, particularly in reference to marriage. She sees marriage as a loss of freedom, that she will be stuck in the house cooking and cleaning for a man, and will never have time to go out and have fun, like she does now. She enjoys going out and fortunately for her, her mother and grandmother are not as strict as many others. As long as she tells them where she is going and with whom she is allowed out. However, Dudu is careful not to divulge too much information to her older relatives about exactly what she does, as she knows her mother will disapprove.

There are threads of shared experiences between the young women from my current research and the young women I worked with previously. The pressure to conform to the normative notion of femininity is powerful throughout their lives and they receive these messages from their family, school, church and popular music, such as gospel music. In many communities and particularly in Langa, a 'good girl' is one who epitomises the normative notions of femininity<sup>162</sup>. The discourse of the "good girl" is powerful in shaping the gender identity of young women as it dictates how a woman should behave, what spaces she should occupy and how her conduct impacts not only herself, but also her family and her community. The discourse of the 'good girl' centres on notions of domesticity and respectability<sup>163</sup>.

Domesticity refers to the idea that the 'natural' place for women is the private space, the household, where they are solely responsible for reproductive labour<sup>164</sup>. The expectation that girls and young women should participate in the upkeep of the household is experienced from an early age. They are expected to clean, cook, do laundry, and look after children and elderly relatives. The amount of household chores the young women have to get through in a day leaves them little to no leisure time, which intentionally or unintentionally keeps the

---

<sup>162</sup> Salo, E. (2004) Respectable mothers, tough men and good daughters.

<sup>163</sup> Campbell, C (1996) *Township families and youth identity*.

<sup>164</sup> Budlender, D. (2003) *Women and Men in South Africa*.

young women off the streets, thus ensuring their respectability, as well as that of the household. In a similar study that addresses the meanings of young women's gender identity in Manneberg, Salo<sup>165</sup> found that the theme of domesticity was powerful in shaping *ordentlike* (respectable) girls. She found that *moeders* (mothers) were responsible for maintaining a respectable household and community. The conduct of the daughter directly impacted on the *moeder's* and household's reputation. Similarly to Dudu's experience, girls in Manneberg were taught from an early age rudimentary skills of housekeeping. These skills included sweeping, dusting, cooking and looking after younger children. As a girl, one learns these skills as a way of ensuring that one becomes a respectable woman, wife and mother by having knowledge and experience in the household, thus maintaining it in an acceptable manner.

In addition to learning skills of housekeeping, domesticity refers to the home as the accepted space for women to occupy. Many of the young women in Langa are aware that they are expected to remain in the household and only leave the house during the day and then only to acceptable places for women to occupy, such as school, church, the shops and the sports complex. Salo<sup>166</sup> found similar results in Manenberg, where young women's movements were monitored and policed by mothers and older women in the community. Respectable young women restricted their movements to the daytime, and only to places that were not "illegal" or "forbidden" for them to go to. Male members of their families also undertook the task of controlling and policing the young women's behaviour. Ayanda expressed how she avoids going out to places where she knows her brother will be present. Her reason for this is that she would have to "behave herself", and therefore not have as much fun as she would have liked. She also believed that it is awkward for her and her older brother to be in the same parties and

---

<sup>165</sup> Salo, E (2004) Respectable mothers, tough men and good daughters.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

clubs. There were a number of reasons for this, one being the age difference and issues of respect, which explains why she can not participate in her usual activities in her brother's presence. This stems from African and *Xhosa* beliefs around respect shown to elders and older members of the family- known as *kuhlonipha*<sup>167</sup>. For these young women, it is important that their image as a respectable "good girl" is maintained as far as possible, even when they are engaging in behaviour that is contrary to this image. Maintaining such behaviour ensures that their parents and their household retain their respectable reputation in the community.

As earlier mentioned, in many communities the reputation of a household is dependant on the daughters being respectable "good girls"<sup>168</sup>. Respectability refers to how a young woman conducts herself with regard to what spaces she occupies, whom she socialises with and what activities she takes part in. There are spaces that traditionally are seen as "male spaces", such as shebeens or taverns<sup>169</sup>. This is mainly due to taverns and shebeens being public spaces where the "male activities" of drinking and smoking occur. It is seen as improper for women to openly occupy these spaces and engage in these activities. This is not to suggest that women were not and are not still present in these spaces. This discussion will be continued in Chapter Five. However, the young women are strongly discouraged from going to these places, as it is believed that being in these spaces may encourage the young women to participate in activities that will further threaten their reputation, such as becoming sexually involved with men. The parents feel that it is important to know whom their daughters are socialising with and this is not easy to know if their daughters go to taverns.

---

<sup>167</sup> Mkhwanazi, N. (2004) Teenage pregnancy and gender identities in the making in a post-apartheid township. University of Cambridge. (Unpublished PhD)

<sup>168</sup> Salo, E. (2004). Respectable mothers, tough men and good daughters.

<sup>169</sup> Mager, A (2003) 'White liquor hits black livers'

The parents of the majority of young women know of their daughters having boyfriends- and some had met them. It was often the case that long-term boyfriends are introduced, such as Dudu's boyfriend of 5 years and Nomhle's ex-boyfriend of 3 years. However, the young women do not introduce boyfriends they had been with for a short time or whom they do not consider as serious. In addition, the young women are reluctant to inform their parents when they are no longer with the boyfriend as having a long-term boyfriend known to the family makes it easier for the young woman to move around or go out. Moreover, the young women were hesitant to introduce too many different boyfriends as this would threaten their respectability and she may be considered "loose". This is the case with Ntombi's friend, who has a reputation of only dating going after white German men who are tourists. Her friend believes that her relationships are serious and therefore, she brings numerous men to her home in the township. However, when it turns out that the men later simply return to their countries without her, on-lookers begin to comment that she was "easy" and that she "gets with any white man". This damaged her reputation as a "good girl".

Young women from Zimbabwe share the sentiments of those from Langa, as revealed in a study on female respectability by Mupotsa<sup>170</sup>. Although Mupotsa's study looked at a specific group of young Zimbabwean women, the themes of respectability run through her study, particularly with regard to their sexual relationships. The young Zimbabwean women feel that they "depreciate" with every boyfriend or sexual partner they have. The desire to remain a virgin until marriage is powerful in shaping these young women's activities and behaviours. In this aspect, the experiences of the Langa women and the Zimbabwean women differed. According to Mupotsa, Zimbabwe's history of nationalism, the impact of

---

<sup>170</sup> Mupotsa, D. (2005) *Zvimwe Hazvibvunzwe: On the politics of being a black Zimbabwean women and a sexual being*. (Research project for partial fulfilment of BsocSc Honours degree) Cape Town: AGI.



Christianity and the young women's middle-class backgrounds shape their particular understanding of their gender identity that in many ways centres on normative femininity. Whereas, the Langa women exist and operate in a context that in many ways is shifting and unstable. This speaks to their geographical position, but also their position in contemporary South Africa and its historical background that is still pertinent in shaping these women's experiences. It is clear that the broader structural aspects of the country's ongoing transition to democracy influence even these young women's lives.

In communities where there are particular and strict gender norms, it is important that young women adhere to these expectations. All the young women experience the pressure to conform to some aspect of the gendered expectations of domesticity and respectability. However, not all of them succumb to this pressure.

### ***The Not-So-Good-Girl:***

#### ***Household Structure and Age's Impact on Young Women's Femininity***

Nomhle sits in the car with me and complains that her grandmother continuously harasses her to clean up around the house, to wash dishes and cook. Nomhle is not interested in cleaning, nor is she concerned with her grandmother's requests, even though her grandmother seems to be the person keeping the family together and Nomhle in line. She does not do many chores around the house neither does Ntombi. In fact, unlike the young girls I interviewed in my earlier research many of the young women interviewed do not regularly do housework. This is not to say that there is no pressure to do so. They simply do not do the chores that their mothers and grandmothers tell them to do. In addition, they are able to come and go relatively easily, as long as their family is aware of where they are going and with whom. The different experiences of the young women speak to their different locations in terms of household structure and age/lifecycle.

Within the households that I have worked, in 2005 and during the current research, 10 out of the 12 families are single parent female-headed households. While conducting fieldwork in Langa I only met Ntombi and Ayanda's mothers. The other mothers were busy at work as they were the sole breadwinners- for households that housed up to six people. Besides having to support their families, they also seem to lead active social lives. According to Dudu, there is a generation of young mothers, women who have had their children in their teenage years and who are now, eighteen to twenty years later, in a position to take advantage of the fact that their children are grown up and they are still young enough to go out. Nomhle's mother had her when she was 15 years old. Therefore as a 34-year-old woman she still wants to participate in social activities.

The shift in the family structure has shaped the ways in which many of the Langa women view their gender identity. For many of the women, their mothers do not seem to follow the norms of respectable femininity either. Their mothers were sexually active at an early age and became pregnant. They were perceived to be involved in 'questionable' activities and may have had a not-so-good-girl reputation. Many of the young Langa women do not have model of a 'respectable' woman to follow. Instead, many of them are taught what it means to be a respectable woman by their grandmothers, who seem to be the greatest advocates of normative femininity. Ntombi explained that her grandmother has very particular notions on how to raise a girl-child, that includes schooling her in housekeeping, keeping her away from men and ensuring that she does not indulge in "bad" behaviour. One day Ntombi told me that her grandmother had found one of her schoolbooks that dealt with issues of sex and relationships. Ntombi said her grandmother was furious, as she felt that a girl should not be exposed to such things until she is ready for marriage, and even then, it should not come

from a book. Ntombi is one of the few young women who respects her grandmother and acknowledges her as a parent or person of authority in the household- unlike Nomhle who filled many pages of her journal with contemptuous comments on how her grandmother gossips about her behaviour as a means to try and control it, as well as the constantly nagging her to do housework.

The lack of strong male or female parental presence from the middle generation- in some of the households- means that there is little monitoring of the young women's behaviour. Many of the young women feel that a male family member should handle discipline. As there are only two households with a male relative present, in these cases, the fathers. The other young women in female-headed single parent households feel that they are able to push the boundaries more. Ntombi explained how her mother used to bring her uncle home whenever there was a need for discipline or punishment. Owing to the fact that discipline is perceived as being a man's job and that there are so few visible men in families in Langa, mothers and grandmothers have a particularly difficult time disciplining their daughters, and especially their sons- who have been taught only to accept discipline from older men.

The difficulties of parenting and disciplining many of the young women, makes it easier for the young women to avoid doing household chores and gives them more freedom to go out. The young women in these households are relatively open about where they go and what they do there. When asked how her mother and grandmother feel about her going out, Nomhle said, "Yeah they are [okay with it], as long as I tell them where I am going it's fine." Some mothers are aware that their daughters go out to nightclubs. Some know that their daughters drink alcohol, but not the quantity of alcohol they consume. When their daughter

has a serious boyfriend he is often brought to the house and introduced, such as Dudu's boyfriend who is known to her mother and grandmother. She said, "Yeah, they know him. At first they didn't like him, but they are trying to get to know him." However, even this seemingly open, honest relationship with the older women generally does not extend itself to sharing information about sexuality and there is often a silence around this- but this is explored further in this chapter. At any rate, the households with mothers that are absent a lot of the time- who are away working- provides the young women with relatively more freedom.

Lindiwe, her sister, Thandi, and Zinzi, aged 24 years, 26 years and 26 years respectively, live alone at home- their parents are away in the Eastern Cape. They therefore have no adult directly monitoring their movements or dictating how they should behave. This is evident in how often they go out. Their weekend begins on Thursday with drinks after work. This continues through until Sunday. Of all the participants, these young women drink the most and go out to clubs and parties the most often. They run their own households and therefore make their own rules. Although the young women do not have to answer to parental figures in their households, they are subject to criticism and gossip by other people in the community, who observe their behaviour. When speaking about women whose social activities mirrored those of Lindiwe, Thandi and their friends, Ntombi was very quick to make negative judgments about "what kind of women" they are based on what she has observed. According to Salo<sup>171</sup>, gossip is often used as a means to police women's behaviour. Gossip can be a very powerful means of control, as it potentially could threaten the reputation of the young woman and her household. Although, Lindiwe and Thandi do not belong to a household that includes older members, they show concern at how their behaviour may affect

---

<sup>171</sup> Salo, E (2004) Respectable mothers, tough men and good daughters.

their younger siblings or Thandi's son. However, their concern does not seem to deter them from enjoying their freedom to go out.

On the other hand, generally the households with both parents and/or a grandmother present are run according to stricter disciplinary codes and the young women within these households feel confined and controlled. They do not feel comfortable being honest with their parents about the activities they partake in on the weekend. In fact, the young women are so concerned about their parents' reactions to their wanting to go out that they end up lying to their parents about where they are going. Ayanda explained that in order to go out to clubs, she either goes to her cousin's house, Ntombi, whose mother is hardly ever home, and gets picked up from there, or she says she is going to a friend's house.

*"Like if I go to my family's home...my aunt is hardly ever home...I can ask my friends to come and pick me up that's no problem, but when I'm here [home] it's like a jail" ~Ayanda*

The young women with a strong parental presence feel pressured to shroud their movements in secrecy and lies in order to share many of their friends' freedom of movement. The desire to be part of club culture is so strong, that the young women will deceive their parents. The young women believe that their parents' strictness, specifically directed at them as young women, is a means to preserve and protect the young women's respectability- and thus that of the household's. These young women also happen to be the youngest in the group.

Age and lifecycle play a significant role in understanding the controls and restrictions placed on these young women. Thandi and Zinzi are both 26-year-old working mothers. Lindiwe is 25 years old and also employed. As explained earlier, these women experience a great deal of control over their own behaviour and actions. In many communities, once a girl

has a child, her status in the household and community is elevated to that of an adult<sup>172</sup>.

Regardless of whether she is married or not, she is treated with respect and given the same privileges as other adult women. Therefore, in Thandi and Zinzi's case, their being mothers, coupled with their age give them allowances that the younger women do not enjoy. According to Salo<sup>173</sup>, many young women in Manenberg become pregnant in order to pass from girlhood into womanhood and therefore be treated as an adult. This is the case in Langa as well.

However, for many of the young women, they do not make a conscious choice to become mothers, though, they are able to reap the benefits of increased social status, which include less restrictions and controls. According to Dudu, it is their "tradition" that when a woman has a child outside of wedlock, the child belongs to the woman's mother. Therefore, their babies do not hinder the young mothers, as they have family members who look after them. In many cases, however, it is the grandmother that is left with the responsibility of looking after these children, while the mothers and daughters are out gallivanting- and, it is where these women go that allows for the creation of femininity that is hidden and subversive and opposed to normative femininity.

### ***"Drink, Party, Relationships...Drink"***

#### ***Leisure Activities for Young People in Langa***

Drink, parties and relationships- according to Ntombi this is how the majority of young people in Langa spend their free time. This was what I found in the research carried out in 2005 with high school girls. During the little free time they had, the young women would go out to taverns, parties and clubs. Similarly, the majority of young women from the current research participate in the same social activities. This is mainly due to the lack of alternative

---

<sup>172</sup> Ibid

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

recreation for young people in Langa. For many of the young women, going out, drinking and dancing are the only fun activities that they were aware of or that they can afford. Although there have been some attempts to offer alternatives for the young people in Langa, very often the resources can not be maintained or owing to mismanagement the activities are stopped.

When asked what she does in her free time during the day, Dudu explained that she attends African dance classes at Guga S'thebe in Langa. Guga S'thebe is a cultural centre in Langa, where one is able to enrol for art or dance lessons and buy crafts and clothing made by members of the Langa community. It also offers skills development training and houses an art gallery. The dance classes recently started again as the dance teacher had left the country to go overseas, and there had been no one to replace him. The teacher, being from Langa, started his lessons again when he returned. According to Dudu, many young people attend the classes. Ntombi was vaguely familiar with the programmes offered at Guga S'thebe. She mentioned that there were drama classes offered there but was not sure how popular they were. During one of my visits to the gallery at Guga S'thebe, I noticed a large group of schoolchildren participating in a music class there. This centre seems like a place that offers many interesting classes that could possibly be an alternative for young people in Langa.

Another alternative in Langa is the LoveLife Y centre. Unfortunately, the conversations with the young women revealed that the Y Centre was perceived not to be a place for young women. According to Nomhle, who used to play basketball at the Y Centre, they no longer are able to use the facilities there because the basketball courts were being used to store things. She felt that the facilities were run down as no one looked after them. In addition, she explained that there were very few girls and young women in the Y Centre; the space was frequented mainly by young men, which meant that she felt awkward going there.

Her experience of the Y Centre concurs with those of the young high school girls from the research carried out in 2005. They felt that the Y Centre was for boys and young men and that they did not feel welcome or comfortable there. Nomhle's experience at the Y Centre led her to find substitute sports activities offered elsewhere.

When I first met Nomhle she played handball at the Langa Complex and everyday at 5pm she would be there for practice. She was often going to tournaments and competitions and spoke excitedly of the trips to Bloemfontein and even a planned trip to Germany in the future. Handball seemed to attract many young people, women and men. However, for a number of reasons she is no longer able to continue playing. One reason being that she became pregnant. Another was mismanagement of funds, which meant that handball closed down indefinitely. It also meant that the trips to Bloemfontein and Germany were cancelled, much to the disappointment of Nomhle and her teammates. With handball no longer an option, Nomhle spends her time going out to parties and braais.

The limited leisure activities for young people in Langa means that most spend their free time in the taverns, parties and clubs that are neither lacking in resources nor in numbers. For some of the young women, free time is constrained due to their responsibilities around the house. According to Shaw<sup>174</sup>, dominant or normative ideologies of gender, in an African context, restrict women's access to leisure time and leisure activities. Women's substantial workload in the home, as well as their work in the formal economy, means that they are left with little free time in which to engage in social activities<sup>175</sup>. In addition to limited free time, women are also restricted due to the notions of femininity and masculinity that classify some activities as "male activities" and therefore off-limits to women. Although this is true of the

---

<sup>174</sup> Shaw, S (2003) Feminist approaches to the study of leisure.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid.



Langa context, my research has revealed that, owing to the above mentioned factors like age and household make-up, the experiences of many of the young women in Langa differs from other young African women discussed by Shaw.

Indeed, young women, such as Ayanda and Ntombi, because of their responsibilities either within their households, at university or their work, do not have a great deal of free time. However, for the majority of the young women informants, particularly those unemployed, there were few restrictions on their time. The restrictions they do experience stem from their ability to finance their social activities, from the notions of “masculine” and “feminine” spaces and the dangers that are perceived to exist in the taverns, parties and clubs. I will explore these issues further in chapter 5. What is of great interest and importance with regard to the leisure activities of young Langa women is how they negotiate between the differing expectations and norms of behaviour associated with the “good girl”, the “not-so-good-girl” and the “club” girl.

### *The “Club Girl”: Creation of Hidden/Subversive Femininities*

Regardless of whether the young women consciously or unconsciously succumb to the pressure to conform to the normative femininity that exist in their social worlds, in varying degrees, there is a performance of the expected and accepted behaviour. This is dependent on the context in which the young woman operates, namely her age/lifecycle and her household make-up. Despite the powerful pull towards normative feminine behaviour, young women engage in activities that are contrary to these. For various reasons, which will be explored in more detail, young women are pulled towards clubs and the culture of clubs, time after time. And it is within these club spaces that there is the creation of a femininity that on the one hand

challenges the normative femininity that is so powerful in their lives whilst on the other hand reinforces an imbalance of power relations between men and women within these club spaces.

The term hidden/subversive femininity stems from the research carried out in 2005. It is used to describe and understand the complexity of feminine behaviour within club spaces and it aims to capture the layered nature of gendered experiences in these spaces. The majority of the young women are able to negotiate successfully between the varying performances in relation to normative feminine behaviour, other women and men.

The term “hidden” is used to describe this particular performance of femininity for a number of reasons. Firstly, the experience of clubs, parties and bars often happens after dark, at night- after dark when the older people have left the city centre and are home, off the streets, which soon fill up with like-minded young people, ready to have a good time. Owing to policing and restrictions on mobility young women’s movements and activities are shrouded in secrecy. Secondly, the clubs and bars themselves tend to be dark and offer some sense of anonymity, where the controls usually experienced by women fall away. There are no mothers, fathers, teachers or preachers in this space. The clubs are dark, the music is loud and most people share the desire to have fun and let go.

For many of these young women, ‘home’ symbolises monotony and restrictions. It is a place where they feel the pressure of household responsibilities, overcrowding- as many of the households include extended family- tensions, caused by the number of people within the home and a sense of entrapment. Parties and clubs offer an escape, a means to break away from the monotony of their day-to-day lives. When asked why they go to clubs, what they get out of them, the young women all explained how they want to have fun, to let go and to enjoy themselves. They see club spaces as an escape from the controls, rules and boundaries.

The term “subversive” is also used owing to the particular engagement with and performance of femininity that occur in club spaces and that are opposed to and challenge the dominant and normative ideas of femininity- if only partly, as will be discussed later. It speaks to women occupying the public space as opposed to the expected private, domestic space. Traditionally, clubs, taverns and bars were seen as a space occupied by men and the women present in these spaces were perceived to be prostitutes or women of low morals<sup>176</sup>. No respectable woman would be seen in these undesirable spaces. However, these spaces offer women an opportunity to challenge the more traditional notions of feminine behaviour. They offer women agency in that by being labelled “loose” they are able to engage in activities that would otherwise be off limits to them as respectable women. However, as mentioned above with regard to the Langa women, even within these club spaces, they attempt to maintain a level of respectability, as the space they are located in is shot through with gendered meanings and messages.

“Subversive” speaks to women “indulging” in bad behaviour such as drinking. The young women are aware of the attitude their parents and older people in their community have to young women drinking alcohol. This was evident in that when the issue of drinking came up in the interviews, all the women with parents and/or grandparents in the house kept looking over their shoulders and spoke in hushed voices so as to ensure that they were not overheard. Nomhle feels that her mother would be disappointed to hear that she drank as much as she used to drink- owing to her pregnancy she has attempted to stop drinking. There is a strong awareness by the young women about how drinking, and specifically getting drunk is perceived by their peers, boyfriends and parents. Lindiwe often reiterated that one can get

---

<sup>176</sup> Mager, A. (2003) ‘White liquor hits black livers’.

drunk, but “not too drunk, so that you don’t remember what you did.” Although the young women are aware of the negative attitude to their drinking, many felt that it formed a large part of their nights out. In fact, the few young women who had attempted to stop drinking<sup>177</sup> admitted that it was not as fun going out without imbibing alcohol. Alcohol use allows the women to let their guard down and makes it easier for them to let loose their inhibitions.

“Subversive” speaks to allowing women to engage and explore aspects of their sexuality, which is often kept under lock and key, such as flirting and “hooking up”<sup>178</sup>. Research has shown that people, other than the women themselves, often control young women’s sexuality<sup>179</sup>. In fact, women have learnt to fear their bodies and their sexual feelings<sup>180</sup>. Although many of the young women have boyfriends, they all agreed that their interactions with men in clubs differ greatly from interactions with men outside of the club space. The young women enjoy being able to talk to men, dance with them, have them buy drinks and sometimes “hook-up” with them. Their seemingly ‘free’<sup>181</sup> interaction with men is an exciting pursuit. Campbell’s<sup>182</sup> study shows how interaction with men in a romantic manner opens up a world of intrigue and excitement for young women, a world to be hidden away from parents but enjoyed with friends. This is similar to the experiences of the young women in Langa. Being able to be free with their boyfriends in the clubs as opposed to guarded in their neighbourhood, is exciting. Being able to talk and flirt with new good-looking men is intriguing.

---

<sup>177</sup> They had been pressurised by the boyfriends to stop drinking owing to the way they behaved. This will be explored further in Chapter 6.

<sup>178</sup> Hooking up was used to describe anything from kissing to sex, but implies that it is not a continuous or serious interaction

<sup>179</sup> Macfadden, P (2004) Sexual Pleasure as feminist choice. *Feminist Africa: Changing Culture*, 2.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> This is problematised in a later chapter, as it has significant meanings when attempting to unpack the club space

<sup>182</sup> Campbell, C. (1996) *Township families and youth identity*.

“Subversive” speaks to the lure of danger. The dangers that exist, particularly for women, in these club spaces are real- the threat of violence, physical and sexual- and have been felt by many of the young women<sup>183</sup>. Nevertheless, the young women go back time and time again. It is the threat of danger that adds excitement to the club experience, as it differs greatly from the young women’s day-to-day lives. The threat of danger is a far cry from the controlled and monotonous world of the “good girl”. There is a powerful pull towards experiences these things, the pleasure of drinking, dancing and flirting.

The aim of this chapter has been to provide an understanding of how femininity is a performance where there are expectations of behaviour that young women experience. These differ based on the space in which the young women are located. For the majority of the young women, normative feminine behaviour, whose premise centres on domesticity and respectability, is expected when in the home, church or school space.

What is evident from the above chapter is the complex nature of this behaviour, as it is largely dependent on the context of each individual woman. The major factors that contribute to the varying experiences were found to be age/lifecycle and household make-up. Younger women are more likely to have more responsibilities around the house as well as more restrictions placed on their movements and their activities. Older women, or women who are working and women who are mothers, enjoyed relative freedom with regard to where they can go and what they could do. It is safe to say that the young women experience some degree of pressure to conform to the normative feminine behaviour.

For most of the young women, the only activity available or attractive to them is going out to taverns, clubs and parties. In the clubs she engages in the activities that a “good girl” is

---

<sup>183</sup> See Chapter Five

forbidden to. However in order to do this they have to negotiate successfully access to these spaces without negatively affecting their reputation and once in these spaces, they perform hidden/subversive femininity. Although the young women are freer in these spaces, they are also aware of the dangers that exist in clubs and the need to maintain their respectable reputation.

This chapter has endeavoured to illustrate the nature of femininity as a performance. A performance that shifts and changes depending on what space and context the women occupy. Through understanding and interpreting the different expectations of behaviour the young women claim agency. Naming the normative and hidden/subversive femininities is not intended to present them as two distinctly unconnected concepts; instead the intention is to assist in unpacking and understanding the complexity of femininities in intricate social worlds. Hidden/subversive femininity attempts to explain the secretive nature of the clubbing world as well as its challenge to normative femininity- while at the same time the normative, to a significant degree, permeates the hidden/subversive. In addition, this chapter has alluded to the aspects of pleasure and danger that the young women experience in club spaces- and it is these aspects that shape the next chapters and indeed underpin the gendered experience of club culture.

## CHAPTER 4

### *The Cultural Meanings of Identity and Space*

The previous chapter addressed the various notions and performances of femininity within the Langa community. The notions of femininity are complex as there are many factors that influence the performance. However, based on experience and observation these performances are decidedly dependent on what space the young women occupy. Furthermore, what space the women occupy is determined by their age and class identity. This chapter aims to unpack the intricate meanings of space as it relates to identity within the context of Langa.

Often townships are portrayed as homogenous spaces where the inhabitants share the same class, race and cultural identity. The range of identities and experiences unearthed from working with a relatively small group of young black women in Langa reveals the diversity of the space. This diversity was further evident in the exploration of the young women's experiences with regard to their social activities. Where the young women go out to is determined by their identity within the township. This chapter will explore the different spaces where these young women party in by attempting to understand the different 'identities' that exist in Langa. Despite the distinctions of identity explored in this chapter, one should bear in mind that they are fluid and changing and people located themselves within and between these varying identities. Ntombi is an example of someone who manages to exist within both worlds in Langa. Having knowledge of the cultural capital associated with these different identities provides her with agency in the township space.

## *“Ghetto Fabulous” Girls: Keeping it real ekasi!*

*“It’s just that they are more ghetto fabulous, there are these Ghetto Fabulous girls who are ghetto like township...they speak Xhosa and slang, y’know the Xhosa slang can be quite rough, it sounds rough”  
~Ntombi*

*“It’s just that it is their [ghetto fabulous girls] attitude, they’ve got a very bad attitude and behaviour as girls, they don’t know how to treat themselves, they are always getting into fights...they don’t know how to act” ~Ayanda*

*“Ja, they know how to use a knife, they know how to stab...they know how to stab.” ~ Dudu*

Zola’s hit song “Ghetto Fabulous” was a celebration and acceptance of the identity of people within townships as it portrayed the township as a fun place as opposed to the prevailing stereotypical images- the song was a rare opportunity for them to have their lives taken note of. Ghetto fabulous is generally understood to mean people who come from the ghetto or- in the South African context- live in townships and who internalise the stereotypes assigned to the ghetto or township and the people that inhabit them.

Within Langa, there are seemingly distinct classifications that stem from the school one attended and therefore one’s socio-economic class. Ayanda and Ntombi described a particular group of young women as “Ghetto Fabulous”<sup>184</sup>, mainly because they went to

---

<sup>184</sup> The term “Ghetto Fabulous” was used by the informants and in no way can be used to describe every woman in Langa that attended a township school. However, it is useful in understanding how class impacts one’s identity.



schools in the township, and this is seen as having a major influence on their behaviour. From what Ayanda and Ntombi described, it can be deduced that these “Ghetto Fabulous” women are from working class backgrounds. Owing to their working class backgrounds, in addition to other factors, they were unable to attend schools in the suburbs- “Model C” schools- meaning they attended township schools, which are riddled with problems of scarce resources and are understaffed<sup>185</sup>.

During an interview, Ntombi pointed out a young woman walking down the street. She described the woman as “Ghetto Fabulous”. She said that women like her keep her awake at night, especially on the weekend, as they walk the streets drunk, Spin<sup>186</sup> bottles in hand, shouting and laughing as they go from one tavern to the next. According to Ayanda and Ntombi, the young women they identify as “Ghetto Fabulous” share common characteristics. They prefer to speak Xhosa- and Xhosa slang-, which according to Ntombi sounds rough. Language is used as a marker of class. Therefore, using “rough”-sounding Xhosa slang paints one as, according to Ntombi, uneducated. These young women are perceived to be “uncouth” and “raw” as they often get physical fights and drink lots of alcohol, openly and often. These young women’s boyfriends tend to be ‘township’ boys too, meaning they also attended township schools. Ntombi described their relationships as “bad” and often times there is physical and sexual violence. The issue of violence in relationships will be explored further in chapter 6.

A perception of “Ghetto Fabulous” guys is that they are unemployed and use crime as a means to finance their expensive lifestyle<sup>187</sup>. Ntombi pointed at that although the majority of the young men are unemployed and engage in criminal activity, there are some “Ghetto

---

<sup>185</sup> Ramphela, M. (1992) Social disintegration in the black community.

<sup>186</sup> Smirnoff Spin is vodka and lemonade mix drink in a bottle.

<sup>187</sup> See Chapter Six for a more in-depth look at the criminal activities of men in Langa.

Fabulous” men that have very good jobs and are law-abiding citizens. However, from observations and discussions with many of the young women, it is clear that for the majority of young men identified as “Ghetto Fabulous”, crime is their main source of income. In addition to crime, these young men look for girlfriends that can also contribute to their upkeep. In other words, according to Ntombi, the men are interested in women with jobs, cars and their own apartments- and these “Ghetto Fabulous” women are highly motivated to get jobs, cars and their own homes in order to escape the stressful home environments and household responsibilities. Despite the negative attitude towards the “Ghetto Fabulous” women, they are strong and driven women, who are not too concerned with what is expected of them by their community.

The young women described as “Ghetto Fabulous” seem to embody and accept their township identity completely and proudly despite the judgments of their “rough” behaviour. Generally, there are aspects of the way one dresses, the music one listens to and the language one speaks that are distinctly township. Today, township culture is being defined and portrayed mainly through *Kwaito* music and artists<sup>188</sup>. Particular designer brand labels such as Converse All Stars and Dickies, particular music such as *Kwaito* and “House” and particular language such as the Xhosa slang Ntombi described as rough are markers of this township culture and to which the “Ghetto Fabulous” women claim ownership. This is evident in the way they talk about music and clubs. Often, Lindiwe describes house music as “our music” and clubs having “our people” when referring to places that play *Kwaito* music or clubs whose patrons are blacks and from the township. From her descriptions there exist strong community bonds, as people from *ekasi* stick together.

---

<sup>188</sup> McLaren, MGT. (2005) Sweetie my baby.

Owing to the fact that the “Ghetto Fabulous” young people are mainly from working class backgrounds with limited financial means, they are often unable to access clubs in town regularly. Lack of transport and high entrance fees charged at many clubs in town mean many township youth cannot afford to go to these clubs. Generally, these young women party in the township and the many taverns in Langa and Gugulethu. However, many of the young women find ways to get the money, which include having people, often men, pay their entrance. When in town they go to specific places, which will be explored later in this chapter. The experiences of the “Ghetto Fabulous” girls differ greatly from those of the “Model C” girls.

### *‘Model-C’ Girls: The Township “Good Girls”*

*“The Model C girls...are quiet, we don’t see them in the township so they are seen as the good girls in the township, that’s why their parents send their kids to white schools or Model C schools, so they have better opportunities” ~ Ntombi*

The “Ghetto Fabulous” girls are often compared to the “Model C” girls like Ayanda and Ntombi. This distinction comes directly from what school the young women attended, which is also an indirect signifier of class. Young women from middle class backgrounds are able to attend Model C schools in the suburbs, therefore are schooled in a different context that has shaped their attitudes and behaviours. The attitudes towards the “Model C” girls are ambivalent in Langa.

They are perceived by some as epitomising the “good girl” in the way they speak and behave. Ntombi revealed that because the “Model C” girls mostly speak English as opposed to Xhosa, they are seen as better educated and more refined, unlike the perception of the

“Ghetto Fabulous” girls. As mentioned earlier, language is a signifier of class and when the “Model C” girls speak in English their English is without a Xhosa accent or a trace of their background. Moreover, due to the fact that the “Model C” girls party outside the township, they appear to the older members of the community to be better behaved. Their activities are hidden from their parents and other members of the community. Unlike the “Ghetto Fabulous” girls, who often go out in the township, and therefore are seen around the neighbourhood, the “Model C” girls’ activities remained secret. Ntombi pointed out that the reason the “Ghetto Fabulous” girls are perceived to drink more and act more rowdy is because their behaviour is visible. The “Model C” girls could be participating in the same activities, possibly even worse, but because they do not do it visibly in the township, their reputation as the “good girls” remains intact.

Some, in particular the “Ghetto Fabulous” girls, perceive the “Model C” girls to be snobbish, owing to the fact that they do not spend a lot of time in the township and when they are in the township they prefer to speak English, instead of Xhosa. In addition, they do not socialise with young people who are not considered to be “Model C”. Some of the young women feel that the “Model C” girls try to distance themselves from the township- in the way they speak, dress, the places they go to and the people they socialise with. From what I observed, I can confirm that to some extent these perceptions are true.

Ayanda is considered by the community and herself, to be a “Model C” girl, as she attended school outside the township and is currently studying at a local university. She acknowledges the differences between herself and the ‘ghetto fabulous girls’. She prefers to speak English and spends her time at expensive upmarket sites such as the V & A Waterfront and Cavendish Square, sites which most young women in Langa would never visit. Because

she spends her time out side of the township, people within in the community believe that she exemplifies the ‘good girl’ image. This is mainly due to her not being visible in the township; the assumption being that if she is not on the streets, she is at home. It is difficult for the community to know what she does outside of the township. As Ntombi insightfully observed, the “Model C” girls are probably behaving in a similar manner to the “Ghetto Fabulous” girls, but they do it on Long Street, as opposed to on the streets of Langa.

It was with Ayanda that I ventured deeper than I have ever been in Langa. After meeting her at the Langa taxi rank we drove through narrow streets crowded with people and recall asking her a number of times where she was taking me. She explained that where I am used to going is considered the “suburbs” of Langa and she was taking me to “real” Langa- this surprised me. From what I knew of her, from the way she spoke, dressed and went to school- that she would be considered “Model C”- I had convinced myself that she lived in a grand house far way from the informal settlements, like Joe Slovo. I was amazed to see that she lives in the heart of Langa and although she lives in a very nice house, shacks and rundown houses surround it. This revealed to me the way Langa is a melting pot where the rich live next door to the poor who are neighbours to those in-between- where “Model C” lives side by side with “Ghetto Fabulous”.

One of the reasons why Ayanda does not frequent places in Langa is because of the animosity between herself, as a “Model C” girl, and the “Ghetto Fabulous” girls. According to Ayanda, the “Ghetto Fabulous” girls, because of their ‘rough and unladylike’ behaviour, are constantly trying to start fights and their targets are generally the ‘uptight’ and ‘snobbish’ “Model C” girls. Ayanda described an occasion when her friend hosted a party in Langa. It was going well until a group of “Ghetto Fabulous” girls pitched up. Because of the on-going

hostility between Ayanda and her friends and the other group of “Ghetto “Fabulous” women, the latter group tried to start a fight by calling them names and swearing at them. The party was abruptly ended as a result of the hostility. According to Ayanda and Ntombi, this behaviour typifies the behaviour of “Ghetto Fabulous” girls and illustrates the divide between the two groups of young women.

*“And there are some girls that are very much like  
bitchy...particularly to me and my friends...and they do go on about  
us as well, that we got bad attitudes and whatnot.” ~ Ayanda*

Similarly to the “Ghetto Fabulous” girls, the “Model C” girls aspire to gain material wealth. Like some of the “Ghetto Fabulous” girls, they also want to move out of their family homes as soon as they are able to afford it. In addition, when choosing a boyfriend they take account of the young man’s job, the clothes he wears and what car he drives. Also, it is seen as more impressive if one has a boyfriend who is not from the township. Owing to the negative stereotype of “Langa guys”, model C girls prefer to find boyfriends from outside the townships and preferably who went to model C schools. According to Ntombi, a “Model C” girl avoids taking public transport at all costs. It is therefore, of great importance that either her boyfriend, or his friend has a car. This is one of the ways she is able to go out in town. In this way her identity within the township affects her experiences in club spaces.

Although class impacts on the young women’s experiences of club culture in very different and profound ways, there are also many similarities that thread through their experiences. All the young women have to negotiate their different identities- between the expectations of their families and communities to be the “good girl” and their desires to experience the “bad” and “forbidden” in clubs and at parties. In these club spaces all the

young women perform similar and particular femininities, which I have called hidden/subversive femininities.

### ***Where's the Party At? Exploring the Clubs***

The above discussion of identities sets up the discussion on club spaces. Where the young women go to- whether “Ghetto Fabulous” or “Model C”- the preferred sites for having fun and what party they attend are largely dependent on their identity, particularly their socio-economic class. The spaces where the young women go to have fun differ in terms of the cultural meanings attached to them in Cape Town. It is interesting to note that two clubs on the same road in the same city can carry such different and significant social meanings for the people who frequent them. The young women from Langa are aware of these meanings and therefore when choosing where they want to go out, they are very aware of what they are looking for and where they will be most comfortable.

Within Langa, there are many options in terms of where one can party. The women spoke of the many taverns around the township, such as Tiger’s Place, just opposite Langa High School. However, very few admitted to going to any of them. Many of the young women feel that these taverns were very unsafe and that one has to be a particular kind of woman to go there. According to Dudu, women who go to the taverns are streetwise and have violent tendencies, in her words “they know how to stab”. This speaks to a kind of femininity some women engage when in certain locations. In order to exist in the “male space” of shebeens and taverns a woman has engage a “streetwise” performance and a readiness to fight as a way to protect herself in that space. Women, who are unable to engage this performance, would rather avoid going to taverns. Dudu explained male gang members frequent the taverns, where they spend their time and their money. She says that if she were to go to the taverns, the gangsters would happily buy her drinks and meat. However, as Ntombi shared,

often women feel powerless within these spaces to refuse the advances of the men, “I didn’t feel like it would be okay to say no, if one was interested”.

In addition to taverns, the young women speak about street bashes that occur every so often in Langa. As the name suggests, the street is blocked off and becomes the party area with DJs, dancing and copious amounts of alcohol are consumed. Very often alcohol companies sponsor these events. These events tend to begin during the day and continue throughout the night. According to Dudu, one used to feel very safe walking around in Langa and going to the street bashes, “I remember in ’99 we used to go out all night, we don’t sleep until 6 o’clock walking around in Langa- there was nothing, you can walk even anytime at night...[now] you can’t just go out if you feel like it.” Dudu explained that at street bashes a great deal of crime is committed. Her fear was that they would either rob her or do worse. When probed about what she meant by was worse, she indirectly indicated that she meant rape. “It’s very dangerous, you don’t take chances...you have to have a car or someone stronger than you, a guy.” Given their own or their friend’s scary experiences on the streets, the young women avoid going out in Langa. They either buy alcohol to drink at someone’s house or they try and go out in town.

Gaining access to the city centre, colloquially referred to as town, is a complex process that includes dodging strict parents, finding transport and having the money for the cover charge and drinks inside. The degree of difficulty in achieving these things is largely dependent on the young woman’s domestic context, as indicated earlier. The majority of the young women informants are “Ghetto Fabulous” and they frequented two particular places in central Cape Town, namely Pata Pata (formerly Snap) and Vudu Lounge. In most cases, however, the partying would begin much earlier in the township. Lindiwe describes a usual



night out. First one buys drinks in the 'location', which are consumed at someone's house. Following this, one goes to a bar for more drinks, somewhere on Long Street perhaps, until it is time to go to the main party at the club. At the club, one proceeds to have more drinks, talking with people and dancing.

The main attractions to Vudu Lounge and Pata Pata are the guest performers, the music played and the people. Nomhle explained that the best parties are when there are guest DJs, famous for their radio shows and usually from Johannesburg. In addition, these clubs host a number of musicians, particularly *Kwaito* artists who are very popular with the young women. What stands out most in terms of what attracts the young women to these particular clubs is the type of music played and the people within the clubs.

Although the young women enjoy a range of different music genres, *Kwaito* and "house"<sup>189</sup> seem to hold more significance for the women. When speaking about these genres, Lindiwe often refers to them as "our music", implying a sense of ownership. The notion that *Kwaito* and "house" belong to Black South Africans and/or township occupants is not specific to these young women. It is a common belief<sup>190</sup>. The ownership of *Kwaito* and "house", which are generally seen as "black music", speaks to one's identity as a black South African occupying a marginalized, but cool geographically and social space. *Kwaito* and "house" music, on the one hand speak directly to the experience of people from and within the township and, on the other hand, helps them forget their challenges, by providing music that is generally free of meaningful lyrics<sup>191</sup>. My previous research showed that for the majority of the young women informants, lyrics are of little importance and what is considered significant

---

<sup>189</sup> There are many different kinds of house music, here I am referring to the kind of house music sometimes called 'Afro' or 'African' house, where the DJ or artists tend to be South African, although not exclusively.

<sup>190</sup> McLaren, MGT. (2005) Sweetie my baby.

<sup>191</sup> This is not to suggest, however, that there all *Kwaito* and house is meaningless, as there are many artists who use their art to impart messages about important issues that they feel need to be addressed.

is the beat, to which they could dance. Interestingly, the sense that the music belonged to them is of utmost importance regardless of whether lyrics conveyed any meaning to these young listeners.

Vudu Lounge and Pata Pata are two of the few places in downtown Cape Town that play *Kwaito* and “house”<sup>192</sup>. Interestingly they are two of the few places where the majority of their clientele is black. From my observations within Pata Pata, the patrons are not solely black South African, but include Black people from many other African countries. I recall going to Pata Pata for a “Hip-hop vs. House” party with a diverse group of friends. The club was filled with people who, from interactions and observations, were from all over Africa and the world. Many of the patrons were black- from South Africa, Zimbabwe, DRC, Nigeria and Kenya. Once again, when speaking about Vudu Lounge and Pata Pata, Lindiwe describes them as being patronised by “our people”. This speaks to the marginality of black South Africans from townships and their need to claim ownership of “black spaces” within the once all-white space of Cape Town. The young women shared with me that when they go out clubbing, they want to see and meet people whom they know or who come from the same places. According to Thandi, when she goes to Pata Pata she likes to see all the people she knows from the township and if she does that means she will enjoy her night.

Owing to the camaraderie within the clubs, particularly fellow township inhabitants, the young women feel relative security and comfort in these clubs. Nomhle and Lindiwe both acknowledge that when they are in a potentially dangerous situation, they can rely on the men from the townships to offer assistance, particularly if the unwanted attention comes from an over zealous man. It seems that the young women enjoy themselves more when in an

---

<sup>192</sup> These clubs also play other music genres, such as RnB and hip-hop, but other clubs tend not to play *Kwaito* and house as often.

environment familiar to them and shared by people who are alike. In addition to feeling protected by men from Langa, the young women also say that they look out for each other. “Each other” here refers to other familiar women from the townships. The young women cite many instances where they came to the rescue of a fellow Langa resident in a club who was in some kind of trouble. This illustrates how going out for these “Ghetto Fabulous” women is about having a good time but doing so in an environment that is accepting and comfortable for them, in a city that otherwise seems to have forgotten them.

The spaces that the “Model C” girls from Langa occupy are vastly different to those of the “Ghetto Fabulous” girls. They tend to avoid going out in Langa completely, apart perhaps from going to a local *chisa nyama*<sup>193</sup>, frequented by both middle class and working class people alike. However, mostly they go to places in downtown, on Long Street in particular. Owing to the fact that they are middle class and have more access to transport and money, they are able to frequent their favourite places in town more regularly and safely- such as Marvel, Ivory Room and Rhodes House. Similarly to the “Ghetto Fabulous” women they are attracted to places where the music and the people they can identify with.

Marvel is a club located at the top of Long Street and is well known for playing hip-hop music. The clientele is one of the most diverse one can find in Cape Town, not only in terms of race but also nationality. According to Ayanda, Marvel plays the kind of music she really enjoys, as she is not a fan of *Kwaito* and “house”. Ivory Room and Rhodes House are clubs located near Long Street and attract a less diverse crowd, mostly university students. The music played at these clubs tends to be RnB and commercial hip-hop. Although Ayanda feels perfectly at home in these places, Ntombi, whose positionality is more ambivalent

---

<sup>193</sup> Chisa nyama is a public braai or barbeque

confesses that although she has gone out to Rhodes House, she often feels uncomfortable there and unwelcome. Rhodes House is renowned for being where the fashionable models of Cape Town, who are predominantly white, party. As a black township girl Ntombi feels she just does not fit in.

Interestingly, what emerges from conversations with Ntombi about the differences between “Ghetto Fabulous” and “Model C” girls is that owing to their upbringing and particularly their schooling, “Model C” girls tend to have a more diverse group of friends, as that is what they have been exposed to whereas the “Ghetto Fabulous” girls have grown up in a less racially diverse environment and this explains some of the reasoning behind their choice of clubs.

### ***The Shared Experiences: Respectability in Clubs***

The above discussion has illustrated the differences that emerge when exploring how the identities manifest themselves when it comes to clubbing. However, the young women share a great deal in their experience as young black women who reside in Langa. For the majority of the young women respectability was of the utmost importance. This was revealed in a discussion about hairstyles, where the young women felt that as respectable and ladylike women, there are hairstyles that should be avoided as they send the wrong message, such as short hair and that long, neat and well looked after hair is the embodiment of respectable femininity. Their notions of femininity are revealed very strongly in club spaces too.

The three main aspects of club culture- appearance, dance and alcohol- all carry with them particular limits and controls that the young women are conscious of in their attempt to retain a level of respectability. According the young women, there is a thin line between what is considered stylish in terms of dress and what is perceived to be distasteful and not respectable. Many of the young women do not wear revealing clothing when they go out to

clubs. A pair of jeans, preferably designer jeans, and a top that is not too revealing is the average outfit, as one looks good but remains decent. There were very strong judgements made about women who did not dress in this manner. Women who wear mini-skirts, with tops with a low neckline, are perceived to be loose and as Ayanda put it “if she’s like in a mini-skirt with her waist basically showing all her curves and her cleavage, then maybe we are like ‘she’s after something’”. In other words she is likened to a prostitute by the way she is dressed is perceived to be unladylike and obvious. It is true that most of the young women wish to attract the attention of people in the club. The young women feel that this can be achieved with taste, style and respectability.

Notions of respectability are particularly powerful with regard to alcohol consumption. Although the young women drink copious amounts of alcohol on a regular basis, there is the constant pressure not to drink too much. Lindiwe, one of the women who drinks the most often, constantly reiterated during the conversations that one must drink a lot, but not get too drunk. All the young women felt that it was undignified and unladylike to get so drunk that one is not aware of what is happening, or that one does things that one will later regret. Furthermore, one determines respectability by what one drinks, where there are some drinks, such as beer, that a respectable woman would not partake in. This aims to illustrate that there exists significant differences in the experiences of the young women, especially along class lines, however, their shared identity as black women creates mutual experiences, such as the meaning of respectable behaviour.

This chapter has attempted to explore the varying identities that exist within the relatively small space that is Langa. It is important to understand how these identities manifest themselves in the context of the social activities of the young women, as this will impact the

further exploration of these young women's club experiences. Although two identities have been utilised, namely "Ghetto Fabulous" and "Model C" these have been used only in an attempt to unpack the complex nature of identity. They have been used to explain and explore the finer aspects of class that impact these young women in their social lives.

As illustrated in this chapter, the young women's class identity, which forms a major part of how they perceive themselves and each other, influences their choice of social spaces. What also comes through is how their notions of respectable femininity impact on where they choose to party. For example, Dudu prefers not to go out in Langa because she feels that any women who spend time in the taverns must be very strong, violent and rough. Similarly for Ayanda, who prefers to go to Rhodes House where it is less raucous and the women are "ladylike". Matched with the notions of femininity is the aspect of danger that exists in these spaces. Langa is perceived as very dangerous; therefore the women that occupy that space are similarly dangerous, as a means to protect themselves.

In addition, there exist the particular norms of behaviour that exist within these club spaces that differ from club to club. This is where the notion of hidden/subversive femininities comes into play. It speaks to the young women's performance of the expected and accepted behaviour within these club spaces. It speaks to young women engaging in activities traditionally seen as "male" and participating in behaviour that challenges the normative notions of feminine behaviour. These activities include drinking alcohol, dancing sensually and flirting seductively. It is these activities that shape hidden/subversive femininities and that shape the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 5

### *Up in the Club:*

#### *Experiences of Pleasure and Danger in Clubs*

The previous chapter looked at how class impacted on the gender identity of young women, thus affecting the places they occupy during their free time and at how the spaces frequented by the “Ghetto Fabulous” girls differ from those of the “Model C” girls in their location, the music played and the clientele. This chapter aims to deepen the exploration of the different club spaces in an attempt to unpack to the nuanced meanings attached to femininity and masculinity in these contexts.

The performance of femininity in club spaces is evident through the young women’s physical appearance and social behaviour. This refers to how women dress when going out, how choices are made when choosing an outfit and for what reason. Appearance is important in this instance, as it is a major signifier of the performance of heterosexual femininity. How the body is dressed and presented can be read and understood in the framework of desirability<sup>194</sup>. It speaks to the audience of this performance and reveals the implicit assumptions about desirability. Social behaviour refers to, in this case, the activities that the young women partake in at the clubs, such as drinking alcohol and dancing. There are particular social and cultural meanings attached to these activities and these activities take on particular meanings in the context of clubs and in relation to normative femininity. This chapter aims to reveal the meanings of appearance and desirability, as well as unpack the cultural meanings attached to women’s use of alcohol, and dance as activities that elicit pleasure, while simultaneously exposing women to danger.

---

<sup>194</sup> Chapkis, W. (1986) *Beauty Secrets: Women and the politics of appearance*. USA: Southend Press.

## *Appearance and Desirability*

*"Yo! Sometimes you are like 'what am I gonna wear tonight?' But I normally wear jeans and sharp pointy shoes" ~Lindiwe*

*"Like my friends like to dress up...want us to all look good...Because you wanna feel good...you want someone to actually come up to you and say you actually look nice" ~Ayanda*

Discussion about what the young women wear to clubs was always exciting and animated. The amount of time and effort put into preparing one's appearance reveals how much emphasis is placed on physical appearance. Clubs are a space where appearance is of the utmost importance; make-up, tight jeans, short tops, high heels, perfume and hair, all signify the performance of this particular femininity. All the women put a great deal of time and effort into choosing the right outfit for the night and at times planned their outfits days in advance. For most of the women, where they were going and what was happening there influenced their choice of clothing. For example, Dudu explained that if there is an out-of-town DJ playing one gets dressed up to look good but also to be comfortable for dancing. If one is attending a Ladies' Night party, then, according to Dudu, one dresses very ladylike and puts in a great deal of effort into their appearance into looking more demure.

The typical outfit for the young women is tight jeans, pointy shoes, a 'cute' top, long dangly earrings and a fashionable bag. As previously noted hairstyles are also significant. It was thought that one's hair reveals a great deal about one's personality and also signifies respectability. Therefore, the young women spend a lot of time and money on their hair. The young women are clear about the boundaries and guidelines when it comes to dressing for club. One cannot go to out to clubs in a mismatched outfit. Sneakers are looked down upon, as



well as tracksuits or any other casual clothes. Simultaneously, one should not dress up too much or dress up tastelessly, such as in a very short skirt, a revealing top. If one does judgements are made about what one's purpose is in the club.

The reasons for dressing up so extravagantly generally stem from a desire to be noticed and admired. Moreover, the young women do not want to be ridiculed or judged for wearing the wrong type of clothing. The attention that the young women are seeking comes from both men and other women as well. Ayanda confessed, somewhat ashamedly, that her and her friends are "guilty" of judging other women by what they wear. She feels that one can tell a great deal about the kind of person someone is by how they carry themselves. Therefore, a too short mini-skirt or a low cut revealing shirt is taken to mean that the woman is loose or easy, or a woman wearing flip-flops when out in town is perceived as not being "lady-like". Aside from impressing other women, the young women also have men to impress.

For most of the young women, impressing men is one of the main reasons for dressing up. When asked why so much effort is put into dressing up, Thandi said, "For the men of course! They must look at us." For some, it is a way to get things from men, such as drinks or transport. Due to the fact that none of the young women had access to their own transport, they either relied on their boyfriends and his friends, or other male friends. Nomhle alluded to how she uses looking good and being especially friendly to a man to secure her transport for the night. By having their own transport, the young women do not have to take taxis, as some of them often do, back to Langa. For others, dressing up was to get attention from men that would lead to flirting and/or 'hooking up'. The young women spoke of their personal experience flirting with and sometimes hooking up with men in the clubs, as well as their friends. The young women were clear that they did not flirt or 'hook up' with men on a

regular basis and it was more the possibility of it happening that thrilled them. Ntombi shared the story of her friend who only dates German men and it is in the clubs that she meets them and from there on forms a romantic relationship. The other women described their flirting as “naughty” behaviour that their boyfriends disapprove of. It is often in the clubs that infidelity will take place. When Dudu was asked if she has friends who go to clubs looking for men, she replied, “Yes I do, but they have not hooked up something serious, but they have hooked up for the night.” The combination of one’s heightened appearance, intended to attract attention, the dim lighting, the music, the suggestive dancing and the alcohol create a cocktail that often leads to unfaithfulness.

Appearance speaks to notions of the body and how it is read in this space. The body carries much meaning, as it is the focus of many taboos, prejudices and judgments<sup>195</sup>. The way one dresses, moves, maintains discipline, and interacts with one’s body determines one’s place in society<sup>196</sup>. Furthermore, one’s “appearance makes statements about gender, sexuality, ethnicity and class”<sup>197</sup>. The emphasis society places on appearance, especially women’s, is what drives the young women to adorn themselves in that particular manner, when they are out at clubs. The desire to be noticed and the need to fit in are powerful influences on the young women. Ayanda yearns to have someone compliment her on her appearance. Thandi craves being the centre of attention and have men flatter her with their advances.

As Chapkis writes “appearance will either assure or deny a woman of lust, love, acceptance, protection, social position and security.”<sup>198</sup> This is even more so the case within clubs where the performance of femininity in heterosexual spaces is a defining feature.

---

<sup>195</sup> Thomas, H & Ahmed, J. (2004) *Cultural Bodies: Ethnography and Theory*. UK: Blackwell Publishers.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> Chapkis, W. (1986) *Beauty Secrets*.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

Interestingly, men are not under the same scrutiny as women. Although there are spaces where men will dress up it is not necessarily expected of them nor are they negatively perceived if they do not. In fact, according to Ayanda, a man who dresses up and visibly puts effort into his appearance is considered a “turn-off”. She added further that no woman wants a man that looks better or takes longer than her to get ready. In this instance, a man’s performance of masculinity is judged and if he displays characteristics considered different to the norm, his masculinity is questioned and he is found unattractive.

Therefore, it can be argued that the level of performance of one’s gender identity is dependent on the space, as well as one’s gender. Regarding club spaces, women tend to put on more of a “show” in terms of the way they dress. The time, effort, anxiety, anticipation and excitement that goes into the preparation of one’s appearance speaks volumes about the meaning and importance of appearance in clubs. The make-up, hairstyles, clothes, shoes and accessories is what women utilise in club spaces to satisfy their desire to be noticed, to be in the spotlight, to be desirable.

### *The Meaning of Dance*

*“When you dance, you are doing the moves, all the moves...cause when dancing with someone you touch like this...” ~Lindiwe*

*“I dance with my friends... [but] if he’s cute and you got the right moves, I will dance with you!” ~Nomhle*

Dance and music are major factors in the young women’s going-out experience. The young women choose the clubs they go to based on which people go there and what music is played. The young women who enjoy going out to Pata Pata and Vudu Lounge are the young

women - the “Ghetto Fabulous” girls - who enjoy listening and dancing to *Kwaito* and “house” music, as that is the main kind of music played at these clubs. The young women who enjoy hip-hop and RnB - who tend to be the “Model C” girls - music frequent places like Marvel and Ivory Room, where they play that type of music. It is important that the music played allows the women to dance in the style that they enjoy and with the people they enjoy dancing with.

Dancing signifies a number of things within club spaces. Firstly, dancing, of course, is a performance that reveals to the onlookers one’s individual style, as well as one’s knowledge of the latest dance moves. Very often, these dance moves are made popular by music videos or a trend develops that catches on fast, causing everyone to know the dance move. This was the case at *Mnqobongobo* in Langa, where everyone on the dance floor is dancing the exact same moves; with some personal renditions added for an individual twist. Dancing is a way to show off one’s rhythm and creativity, to have people notice and admire one’s talent on the dance floor, with one’s girlfriends or boyfriend. How the young women dance depended on whom they were dancing with.

Many of the young women preferred going out with their girlfriends, as a “Girls’ Night Out” or “Ladies’ Night”, as they felt that they were less restricted than when they went out with their boyfriends. All the young women expressed the feeling that they have a great deal of fun when they go out with their girlfriends, especially with regard dancing. Often, they make a circle that they all dance around in, and from time to time, one of the young women would enter the circle and dance, to the great excitement and entertainment of her friends. Having this circle of girlfriends makes it difficult for unwanted men to infiltrate, therefore protecting themselves from harassment. This is one of the many ways that young women

guard against unwelcome male attention. On these nights the young women simply want to enjoy themselves dancing without the bother of men.

However, there are times when the young women do want to and will dance with men. Of course, this happens when they are at the clubs without their boyfriends because their boyfriends do not approve of the young women dancing with other men. According to Lindiwe, “eh, when you dance, you doing the moves, all the moves that’s what he thinks when we are dancing with another guy...cause when I am dancing with someone you touch like this [*as she touches her chest and hips*]” Similarly, the young women disapprove of their boyfriends dancing with other women. The reason for this is quite simple, the manner in which men and women dance in certain clubs, is often very raunchy and suggestive. One could say that the dancing is so suggestive of sex that a partner looking on would feel as though infidelity were occurring right there in his or her presence. The young women confessing to me that they would only dance with a man, other than their boyfriend, if he were good-looking confirmed this. The thinking being that it would be more enjoyable to dance with an attractive man.

The young women say that they would much rather go out clubbing without their boyfriends for the reasons stated above. They want the attention of other men in the club; attention that usually comes in the form of flirting, which cannot and does not happen when the young women are at the club with their boyfriends, as Nomhle put it, “Yo, no talking, no nothing, just me and him!” And, every now and then they want to be able to dance with other men, and sometimes, as Lindiwe put it, be “naughty”. This then also speaks to the notion of attractiveness and desirability, which often goes beyond admiration and appreciation from a distance and becomes a one night “hook-up” as many of the young women spoke about. And,

this usually occurs through the performance of the body, through the young women's appearance and also how they use their bodies in that space, particularly their dancing.

There are powerful meanings attached to dance, what music one dances to, how one dances and with whom one dances. According to Hanna<sup>199</sup>, the body joins sexuality and dance as they share the same instrument and it is through dance that feelings and ideas about sexuality and sex roles take shape. Where women's sexuality is controlled and policed at home, schools and church, in the club space they are able to explore and experience their sexuality through movement of the body. An otherwise taboo expression of desire is openly displayed. Dance is used as a way to communicate feelings, needs and fantasies<sup>200</sup>. The manner in which they dance with men is highly sensual and sexual, and often mimics sex, "a vertical expression of horizontal desire"<sup>201</sup>. Dancing is one of the major pleasurable experiences in club spaces.

### *Alcohol Use in Clubs*

*"At least you must start in the location, ne? You mustn't get drunk that much... Sometimes we buy a bottle of Jack Daniels, then we drink here in the location, then maybe four 6-packs, we are four...and then we get drunk" ~Lindiwe*

*"I think they [women from the township] drink a little bit more...for instance, every weekend I cant' sleep because...they are walking around they are drunk and they are carrying these Spins probably walking from one tavern to the next"~ Ntombi*

All the young women agree that the main activity when they go out is drinking.

Gender is a determinant of exactly what young people drink. The majority of the young

---

<sup>199</sup> Hanna, J.L. (1988). *Dance, Sex and Gender*.

<sup>200</sup> Buckland, F. (2002) *Impossible dance*.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.

women's drinks of choice are ciders, which include Savanna, Hunter's Dry and Spin. A few of the young women enjoy drinking whisky, while others enjoy cream liqueurs. None of the young women drink beer, as they feel that beer is a bitter drink that only men enjoy. A great deal of meaning is placed on what people drink and how much people drink. Once again, what one drinks is an indicator of class and a signifier of respectable gender identity.

Just as gender is a factor in the young people's alcohol consumption so class also impacts on their choices. Generally, it is thought that people who drink beer are of a lower class- "Ghetto Fabulous". The kind of beer one drinks further distinguishes one's class and upbringing. Ntombi recounted a situation where her cousin mocked her brother, calling him a "bergie"<sup>202</sup> for drinking a beer, her brother replied, "How can I look like a bergie when I am drinking Heineken?" The same meanings are placed on gender differences, whereby it is perceived that beer is seen as a man's drink and there are certain assumptions made about women who drink beer, such as being streetwise and rough, therefore unladylike. For the young women informants, ciders are the preferred drink, along with whisky. Class differences arise when it comes to wine and cocktails, as only two of the young women enjoy them and these being the only two visibly middle class women.

My research reveals the extent to which alcohol use makes up a large part of young women's day-to-day lives. Attached to this practice are feelings of merriment, freedom and release. For many of the women, alcohol allows them to escape the pressure and stress from their everyday lives, whether these be their responsibilities within the household, school, work or relationships. In order for the young women to truly relax, most of them have to drink alcohol when they are out. For many of the young women, alcohol is something that goes

---

<sup>202</sup> Bergie is literally a mountain man, but is used to refer to a homeless vagrant.

hand in hand with going out and they partake in it on the weekend. However, for a few of the women, alcohol features prominently and fixedly in their lives, and it is these women who do not have to answer to parental figures.

As discussed earlier, alcohol is seen as a pleasurable indulgence, successfully hidden from parents and guardians. During the interviews, where the issue of drinking came up, many of the young women, with elder family members present, were constantly checking to ensure that their mothers or grandmothers could not hear what was being discussed. Although for some of the women their parents knew of their drinking, out of respect they did not want them to hear the details. The whispered voices revealed that, even within households with relative openness, the topic of alcohol was either avoided or downplayed. Of course, the extent to which the women confided in their parents about their alcohol intake was, as discussed earlier, dependent on their age and household structure. However, a level of respectability was kept within the home, and interestingly, in the clubs too.

The young women often made it clear that although they drink, they are careful not to drink “too much”. They feel that there are judgments made about women who allowed themselves to get drunk. Nomhle recounted an instance when she got so drunk that she believed she was dancing but was actually hitting people and bumping into them on the dance floor. Subsequently, she was dragged out of the club, where the bouncer proceeded to use a stun gun in order to sober her up, however she was so drunk that she neither felt nor remembered a thing at the time, but felt strangely sore the next day. When asked how much she had had to drink, Nomhle replied, “It was a lot, it was a lot. We bought Amarula and Spin, we had our own carry pack<sup>203</sup> ...I finished my whole carry pack.” After this incident, her

---

<sup>203</sup> Carry pack is a 6 pack



friends all chastised her for allowing herself to get that drunk and out of control. She then decided that it was time for her to cut down on her drinking. This story illustrates, firstly, how drinking can easily get out of hand and turn into a dangerous situation and secondly, the fact already commented on, that there are levels of respectability that govern and guide behaviour, especially that of women, and lastly, how friends look out for each other and act as disciplinarians when one of their friends steps out of line.

Unfortunately, limited research has been undertaken on women and alcohol use in contemporary society. Traditionally, approaches to alcohol studies have been from a male perspective thus marginalizing women and viewing them as merely an appendage to men within the family<sup>204</sup>. They fail to see women as active agents who engage with alcohol in particular ways, giving it particular meaning in their lives. The work available tends to look at aspects of abuse, neglecting to explore the cultural meanings attached to the practice<sup>205</sup>. According to Papagaroufali, drinking practices are sites of resistance enacted by women against established ideas about female gender, sexuality and pleasure<sup>206</sup>. In many ways, the use of alcohol as a means of resistance and rebellion against the established norms of society is a theme that runs through the notions of youth cultures, over many generations<sup>207</sup>. It is believed that youth express their dissatisfaction and frustration through activities such as drinking copious amounts of alcohol, drug use and sexual promiscuity<sup>208</sup>.

Although, in these accounts of youth experiences, there is a tendency to assume male experience is equivalent to female experience, when indeed, based on the understanding of

---

<sup>204</sup> Ettore, E. (1997). *Women and alcohol; A private pleasure or a public problem?* London: The Women's Press Ltd.

<sup>205</sup> Gefou-Madianou (1992) *Alcohol, Gender and Culture*.

<sup>206</sup> Papagaroufali, E. (1992). Uses of alcohol among women; Games of resistance, power and pleasure. In D. Gefou-Madianou (ed.) *Alcohol, Gender and Culture*.

<sup>207</sup> Tselane, T. (1989) *Black South African Youth Culture*.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid

socialisation and notions of feminine behaviour and masculine behaviour, it is clear that these experiences are often vastly different. However, one cannot completely dismiss the idea that young women use these social activities as a way to challenge the gendered norms in which they are inculcated. The young women may not consciously utilise alcohol as a means to challenge or subvert these established norms or dominant notions of femininity, however, they are aware that their behaviour, in different degrees, does go against what they have learnt about respectable behaviour. Therefore, women are unconsciously pushing the boundaries of gender expectations. In this respect, Papagaroufali's<sup>209</sup> understanding of the meaning of alcohol as a rejection or challenge to these dominant ideologies is a useful means to understand women and alcohol.

According to Rocha-Silva et al<sup>210</sup>, in their study conducted in 1994, with young people between the ages of 10-21 years old, the reasons given for drinking were that it was mood-changing, for fun and enjoyment, and experimentation. This reveals the similarity between the 1994 study and the current study, as the young women also listed similar reasons for drinking. For the young women fun and enjoyment were the main reason, but they also enjoyed the feeling that alcohol gives them in terms of it relaxing them and making them feel good. The attraction to alcohol seems to have been a constant throughout the years for young people.

The 1994 study<sup>211</sup> revealed that young women's use of alcohol was significantly less than men in both urban and rural areas. In addition, young women tended to drink more if they had a male partner, either a boyfriend or a husband<sup>212</sup>. Although it is difficult to compare a sample size of 7 to that of Rocha-Silva et al's study, based on the fact that all the young

---

<sup>209</sup> Papagaroufali, E. (1992). Uses of alcohol among women.

<sup>210</sup> Rocha-Silva et al (1996) *Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drug Use Among Black Youth*.

<sup>211</sup> Ibid

<sup>212</sup> Ibid

women drank, they spoke of all their friends drinking and from observations carried out in clubs that revealed the majority of the women drinking, it is safe to assume that a large number of women in the urban areas frequently partake in the consumption of alcohol. Generally, as found in the Rocha-Silva study<sup>213</sup> young people who were regular church-goers did not drink, which concurs with my own earlier<sup>214</sup> study in Langa. However, many of the young women informants do not attend church regularly and therefore did not have this as a major influence on their behaviour, in particular their drinking. Not all the young women from Langa who drink have male-partners. Furthermore, Rocha-Silva et al<sup>215</sup>, found that the majority of young women who drank often did so in their own homes, as opposed to shebeens/taverns and clubs/discotheques, like the young men. This differs from the findings in this study, as indeed some young women drank in their homes, however, the majority of the young women drank at parties and clubs.

The Rocha-Silva et al, study offers an interesting comparison as it explores the use of alcohol at a particular moment in history, 1994, and the gender differences with regard to alcohol use. When compared to the current study, one finds how the use and meaning of alcohol has changed and shifted over the past 12 years, particularly in terms of women's participation. As mentioned earlier, firstly, this current study reveals that there is seemingly an increase in the number of women who drink alcohol. Secondly, this study reveals that whether or not the young women have boyfriends does not influence whether they drink or not. In fact, there may even exist a shift in the influences boyfriends have over the young women's drinking, whereby he may discourage her drinking, but this will be explored in more detail in chapter 6. Lastly, the 1994 study found that young women tended not to drink in public

---

<sup>213</sup> Ibid

<sup>214</sup> McLaren, MGT (2005) Sweetie my baby.

<sup>215</sup> Ibid

spaces, but in their homes whereas this current study found that young women occupy the public spaces of shebeens/taverns and clubs in large numbers and frequently. This finding concurs with that of Thornton<sup>216</sup>, which found that young women frequented dance clubs more than young men, and that young men were more likely to engage in other activities.

The shifts and changes of young women's social activities speak volumes about how femininities and masculinities are fluid and, therefore, change over time. The context in which the young women live, influences their ability to challenge normative notions of feminine behaviour. This is evident by how many women occupy traditionally "male spaces" and partake in "male activities" relatively freely. The power and impact of normative notions of femininity are revealed within these "unfeminine spaces" very subtly. Notions of respectability seep into the space as they govern the limits and boundaries of the young women's behaviour within clubs. Respectability comes though in the way one dresses/carries oneself, in how much alcohol one drinks, in whom one dancing with and how, and finally, in the secrecy and veiling of one's behaviour from one's parents, guardians and elder community.

---

<sup>216</sup> Thornton, S. (1994) *Club Cultures*.

## *Experiences of Risk and Danger*

*"I didn't feel like it would be okay to just say no if one [of the men] was interested. I felt like they would keep nagging...until I said something maybe I shouldn't have said, then I would get into trouble" ~Ntombi*

*"I don't usually accept drinks from guys because I know where it will end. Its either the person will demand you into chatting with him or you will go outside with him and sit in the car or he'll offer you a lift." ~ Nomhle*

The young women are very aware that, as much as there are pleasurable clubbing and partying experiences, there are dangerous places and situations that they could find, and have found themselves in. Generally, the women feel that going out in Langa is dangerous, owing to the fact that there is a rise in violent crimes because of the increase in gang activity, as mentioned earlier. Taverns are considered to be places where gangsters hang out and one has to be a particular kind of woman to frequent them. Dudu described this kind of woman as strong and rough, and is able to take care of herself because "they know how to stab". Dudu described how Langa has become increasingly unsafe. This was confirmed by Nomhle's grandmother, who felt that young people having nothing to do has increased crime. She remembered Langa as a safe place for everyone but admits that nowadays she sometimes feels unsafe. Crimes, particularly hi-jackings, housebreak-ins and rapes, are a common everyday experience. Dudu mentioned an incident where one gang was "in their shack smoking and this other gang came and shot them". These incidents mean that very few young people, particularly women, go out in Langa.

Aside from the dangers within Langa, the young women are also aware of the dangers in clubs in town. When it came to men offering to buy the women drinks there are a variety of reactions, all cautionary. Some of the young women refuse these offers outright and state that they are aware that there is the expectation of reciprocity. Nomhle explained that, in her experience, when a man buys a woman a drink, he feels entitled to talk and dance with her the rest of the night. Moreover, he expects to take her home, which according to Nomhle, meant that he wanted to hook-up with her. She therefore never accepts drinks from men she does not know. Ayanda and Ntombi feel that they do accept a drink, but only if they accompany the man to the bar, so as to ensure that he does not 'spike' the drink with some kind of drug. Ntombi explained that she does not accept "man-made" drinks, drinks that do not come from a closed bottle, as a precaution against spiked drinks.

Many of the women rely on their intuition when it comes to accepting or not accepting drinks. If they feel that the man is 'sleazy' and has ulterior motives, then they do not accept the drink. However, if he seems like a genuinely friendly man, and is good-looking, they are more willing to accept a drink from him. Lindiwe described a situation where a man was buying copious amounts of alcohol for a young teenage girl that Lindiwe knew from Langa. Lindiwe was aware that he intended to get the girl drunk in order to take advantage of her and at that point the girl was too intoxicated to realise what was happening. When the man proceeded to drag the girl out of the club, presumably to his car, Lindiwe stepped in. He then turned violent on Lindiwe, pushing her and insulting her. She went to the manager who kicked the man out of the club. Lindiwe did not say what happened to the girl, but mentioned that that kind of situation happens often. Lindiwe also shares that this kind of situation is more

likely to happen to the younger women as they are naïve and not yet as aware of the dangers within clubs.

The dangers within these club spaces usually relate to the woman's physical safety. Often, women attempt to safeguard against this danger by maintaining a certain level of respectability. As discussed earlier, there tends to be a level of respectability that many of the young women aim to achieve, even when clubbing. By maintaining some aspect of respectability that young women can remain "ladylike" in what is perceived as an "unladylike" space. The notion of the "good girl" extends itself into different spaces, even to where one might think it impossible to perform this kind of respectable feminine behaviour. Respectability is displayed through the young women's dress, alcohol consumption and interactions. By dressing in a, relative to the space, modest fashion, the women do not portray themselves as "available" or loose. By not getting drunk, the women are able to remain in control of their actions and are aware of things going on around them. By interacting in a friendly but firm manner, they ensure that they are not leading men on or being rude. Ntombi had an experience where she went out to a party in Langa where she knew none of the people. She felt the men there were aggressive, as they had been drinking. She felt that she had to maintain a level of sociability because she did not want to get on their bad side. At the same time, she did not feel that it would be all right for her to say no, if one of the men were interested and made a pass at her. She therefore had to negotiate between being friendly and ensuring that she did not put out a message that she interested in their propositions. In this way, she did not anger the men by being rude and aloof, while simultaneously discouraging their advances.

For young women, there is a constant negotiation between different performances of femininity, as illustrated in the story above. In addition, they also negotiate between experiences of pleasure and danger in club spaces. The activities that the young women engage in within clubs are sought out owing to the fact that they are enjoyable and bring pleasure to the women in one way or another. For instance, meeting and flirting with men is something that the young women get pleasure from, they find it interesting, “naughty” and exciting, whether they have a boyfriend or not. In some cases they young women successfully engage and interact with the men, sometimes just flirting, other times hooking-up with them. However, there are some instances where they do not feel in control of the situation, for various reasons, and it is at this point that the pleasure becomes danger. The point where what the man wants, he will get, regardless of whether she wants it too. This is Dudu’s fear when she goes out in Langa. She feels that if one goes without protection, such as a man or a large group of people, any number of things could happen, including rape. When asked whether that had happened to anyone she knows, she expressed that it has indeed happened to women she knows. Therefore, the threat of physical violence is real and prevalent in the lives of young women.

This chapter has looked at the finer details of the club experience. It has focussed on the main aspects of club culture that reveal interesting and meaningful insights into the performance of hidden/subversive femininity. On many levels, the club experience is one of liberation and release for the young women. They partake in the activities that bring them pleasure. However, it is these activities that challenge and weaken dominant and normative notions of femininity. By engaging in these activities the young women, knowingly or



unknowingly, push the boundaries of acceptable feminine behaviour. Therefore, supporting the notion that femininity is a fluid and changing performance.

However, as much as the young women's behaviours and activities challenge some normative notions of femininity, the femininity performed in club spaces also reproduces and reinforcing other particular gender dynamics and interactions that disempower women to a certain degree. Within clubs, the controls and monitoring of young women's behaviour are not by their parents or guardians, but by their boyfriends and other men. One of the main reasons the young women prefer to go out to clubs without their boyfriends is because they do not want to be told what to do. For many of the young women, their boyfriends have expectations of how they should behave. Their boyfriends do not want them to drink too much, talk to other men, dance with other men, or dress "inappropriately". In fact, some of the young women are contemplating giving up drinking, so as to appease their boyfriends, who feel that the young women are "naughty", in terms of flirting with other men and being too argumentative.

The controls the men have over the young women are not limited to club spaces but are also expressed in their everyday lives. The following chapter will delve deeper into the controls placed on women by their boyfriends and other men within club spaces as well as in their daily lives. It will illustrate how the gender dynamics and power imbalance in clubs is mirrored outside of that space and has powerful implications for young women, particularly regarding their control over their own sexuality.

## CHAPTER 6

### *Out of the Club, Back into Life*

The previous chapters have looked at the performance of femininities in different contexts, with particular focus on hidden/subversive femininities in club spaces. I argued that there are complex nuanced meanings attached to femininities in clubs, which give rise to particular gender dynamics between women and women, and which women and men reinforce and reproduce within these clubs. Owing to the fact that femininities and masculinities exist within a particular gendered paradigm, hidden/subversive femininities- as much as they challenge these structures- are restricted. In other words, there is a limit to how much these femininities can weaken these patriarchal structures.

This chapter will address how hidden/subversive femininities may challenge normative femininities with regard to roles and expectations within the home and community, but also reinforce unequal gender relations between young women and men. This stems from a shift in the policing of young women's mobility and behaviour. Within the home parents generally are responsible for monitoring women's movements and behaviour. However, as previous chapters have explored, the monitoring of young women is dependant on age and household make-up. As much as some of the young women are at liberty to come and go as they please within their households, they are not completely free of controls and restrictions. Many of the young women are in sexual relationships where they are subject to similar restraints concerning where, when and with whom they can go out. Moreover, once in the clubs, the young women are aware that their boyfriends and their boyfriends' friends expect them to behave in a certain way.

The controls over their behaviour that the young women experience are not limited to club spaces but are also present in their daily lives in the context of the township. The dominant notions of acceptable masculine behaviour impact on women in profoundly interesting but dangerous ways. The traditional notions of manhood conflict with the lived realities of young men in Langa. This contradiction often leaves men angry and frustrated and these intense feelings are vented in various negative activities and behaviours. These will be explored in this chapter, as well as the power dynamics between the young women and young men.

### *Boyfriends in the Club*

*"He (boyfriend) used to not like it [going out], but he got used to it. He says that I could get raped by the people or they may take advantage of me because they buy me clothes and I get lifts in their cars"*

*~Nomhle*

Another interesting aspect of young women's club experiences was discussed in Chapter 5, namely that although club-going appears to provide them with freedom and independence, a more in-depth understanding will reveal that even though this freedom and independence is negotiated successfully from their parents and guardians, the monitoring and controlling of behaviour is replaced by that of the young women's boyfriends and other men in the clubs. Once again, the young women find themselves negotiating the expectancies of their boyfriends and their own wants and desires. These men often try and determine where and when the young women can go out and more importantly what they do when they are there. Of course, this does not happen without some opposition from the women, who find themselves doing as their boyfriends demand or simply doing as they please. Sometimes they

succumb to their boyfriends' wishes, while at other times they resist their boyfriend's demands and go out and behave in the way they want to.

When asked how their experience of clubbing is different without their boyfriends, the young women answered, after much laughter and giggles, that they can be "naughty" and do what they want when they are out without their boyfriends. This means that they can drink as much as they like, talk to other men and dance with them, if they so choose, or as some others have done, gone further than that and hooked up with men other than their boyfriends. Random "hook-ups" tend to occur on "ladies' nights", when the women go out with only their girl friends and very often the intention is to meet other men. Girls' nights out are extremely popular for the very reason that the young women do not have to consider the feelings and expectations of their boyfriends. Dudu confessed: "There is a difference, like me and my friends we meet maybe some guys [laughs]...and you do a lot of stuff." Therefore, girls' nights can be viewed as strategy that the women employ to go out and have fun, without the pressures of their boyfriends.

The young women expressed how different and often boring it is to go out with their boyfriends. When asked what it is like to go out with them, Dudu said, "Agh, you just sit with him and you dance together". The young women complained that they are unable to leave their boyfriends' side and that the majority of the night is spent sitting next to and drinking and chatting with only them. Moreover, the young women are only allowed to talk with their boyfriends, firstly because they are usually seated together and secondly, their boyfriends often get jealous when the women talk to other men- like Dudu's boyfriend. "Whoo, he hates that. He is overprotective 'cause most of the time I am with him". For some of the young women, their boyfriends did not even dance with them. As Lindiwe complained: "Agh! With

your boyfriend he would always stand but when you are...enjoying with your friends, no one is going to tell you anything.”

As mentioned earlier, Lindiwe’s boyfriend attempts to get her to stop drinking as he feels that she becomes naughty and argumentative when she is drunk. “I always talk back to him and am shouting at him...if I ask him to do something, I want him to do it now! He mustn’t delay...we are always arguing.” A few of the young women’s boyfriends are uncomfortable with the amount of alcohol their girlfriends consume. In a couple of cases, the women actually drink more than their boyfriends. “I am the one who is drinking more,” says Lindiwe. Some of the women have tried to stop drinking, such as Nomhle. However, there are some women who are adamant that they will continue drinking and feel that it is unfair that they should be asked to stop. “If he doesn’t want me to drink, he mustn’t drink also” Lindiwe shares.

The young women feel that they have to be on their best behaviour when they are out with their boyfriends for fear of upsetting them and that it is easier and more fun to go out without them. However, even when the women are out without their boyfriends, they often worry that the boyfriends’ friends will observe their behaviour and later report it to the boyfriend. This reveals an interesting shift in the policing and monitoring of young women’s movements and behaviour, where they are monitored by their boyfriend and his friends, and the fear of their boyfriends finding out about their naughtiness impacts on their behaviour, “I know that his friends go to club, cause if you dance with someone they will tell him and then he’ll ask: ‘Who were you dancing with in the club yesterday?’

It is important to note that for some of the young women, going out with their boyfriends, although somewhat inhibiting, gives them a sense of security and protection from

other men. As Nomhle put it, “I like going out with my boyfriend because I am safe when I am with him.” In this instance, the concern is not about the boyfriend’s reaction to her behaviour, as explored earlier, but protection against other men, who often prey on women in the clubs, as illustrated by Lindiwe’s story about the older man buying drinks for the young woman, whom he later tried to leave the club with, “Well the young girls...they take advantage of them, like pulling them out of the clubs.”

It is not uncommon that assaults and rapes happen in club spaces. Lindiwe shared that it is not unusual for women to be beaten up in clubs, usually for not complying with men’s wishes. In fact, these assaults are not limited to strangers in the clubs but include women being beaten up by their boyfriends, in public. When I asked Dudu if a lot of rape occurs in Langa, she replied, “Yes, a lot, because even my friend’s mother last year she was murdered, raped and murdered.” From the young women’s descriptions there seems to be a sense of entitlement, on the young men’s part, when it comes to the power and control they have over women. This is not to suggest that all these men are alike, as according to Lindiwe, “...some of the guys from the location they take good care of us cause we know each other from the location, some of them.” There *are* men in these clubs that treat these young women with respect and offer security. However, based on the discussions with the young women, it seems their negative experiences with men far outweigh the positive. For the young women, the men are pushy, aggressive and dangerous. Similarly to the women, the behaviour of the men can be understood by addressing notions of masculinity that affect and impact on men’s behaviour.

### ***Notions of Masculinity: from Gangsters to Initiates***

Although this research did not focus exclusively on young men and did not directly explore masculinities, the preceding chapters illustrate the way femininities and masculinities

are intertwined and complex in intricate ways. It is therefore important to explore and attempt to understand masculinities as they relate to femininities in this context by drawing on discussions with the young women, observations and previous literature written on the subject. It would appear that the position of men in Langa is determined by the incongruence between what constitutes a “man” and the capabilities of men in township spaces<sup>217</sup>. In other words, owing to a lack of adequate educational facilities and few job opportunities, men very often are unable to live up to these standards- leaving them frustrated and angry<sup>218</sup>. In addition, according to Ramphele<sup>219</sup>, the lack of male role models for boys growing up the township impacts hugely on the development of male identity. Judging by the household structure of the young women informants, this is probably the case in many other households in Langa. Furthermore, the model of masculine behaviour tends to centre on violence and aggression, experienced, in their households through domestic violence and during the liberation struggle and political demonstrations and protests during the Apartheid era. The powerful message of violence is coupled with the traditional notions of masculinity, particularly of the *amaXhosa*, which include courage and leadership, where a man is an initiator, provider, hero and protector<sup>220</sup>. The notions of manhood are learnt during initiation, including circumcision, and once a boy has gone through this process he is considered a man.

Urbanisation has caused a disturbance in these rituals, meaning that the tradition of going out into the “forest” or “mountain” is no longer upheld by a lot of the residents. According to Ntombi, the boys who live in the informal settlements of Langa, who tend to be recent inhabitants, return to the Eastern Cape for initiation as they still have rural homes there.

---

<sup>217</sup> See Xaba and Ramphele’s discussion of the traditional concept of being a man.

<sup>218</sup> Ramphele, M, (2002) *Steering by the stars*.

<sup>219</sup> Ibid

<sup>220</sup> Ibid

She added that they are more likely to change positively when they return. However, the boys who come from families that have lived in Langa for generations, therefore having no connection to a rural home, will attend initiation in makeshift structures constructed on the outskirts of the township. Unfortunately, these men tend not to change in the same manner the Eastern Cape men do. Many of the young women perceive few positive changes after the men return from initiation. Dudu felt that some of the men change for the better because once they return they no longer participate in gang activity but she acknowledges that the majority do not change their behaviour. In fact, Ntombi felt that they come back worse, for example when she asked her cousin to go to the shops for bread, he replied, “No, I’m a man, there’s no way you can ask me now.” Ntombi explained that, “...now they are men they can do whatever they want. Ah, they have babies when they come back for some reason, not all of them, but some.”

The men in Langa experience far less restrictions, in terms of their movements and accepted behaviour, than the young women. This is observed in the different controls that Ayanda and her brother experience, where, “...cause he’s a guy he can do whatever he wants, cause I’m a girl they are much more scared.” This also relates to household chores. As Ayanda admitted, she has more chores than her brother. This is the case with many of the young women, except Dudu who feels that more and more men are helping out around the house. Nevertheless, the male experience in Langa is vastly different to the female. Men are more visible in Langa than women and they seem to comfortably occupy the public spaces, such as the streets and taverns. Driving down the streets of Langa reveals many men sitting on beer crates at the corner, talking and laughing or outside Tiger’s Place, drinking and washing



their cars. As Ntombi explained, "...they just go and hang out on the corner and go to hangout at Tiger's...the whole day."

According to Ntombi, women who are employed are expected to spend their money on the household. "...You can't drink your money, but a boy, its okay cause it's a boy...if it's a boy then he'll do what he needs to do." Generally, young women are more likely to seek employment than young men, the main reason being that the young women feel a sense of obligation to the household and want to help out with finances while simultaneously wanting to move out and to escape those very pressures. On the other hand, the young men, because there are fewer pressures and expectations, tend to remain in the household. "...The boys tend to build flats in the backyards and girls tend to move out", as Ntombi's cousin has done. Ntombi's cousin lives in the backyard and although he helps out with some of the household chores, he spends his days hanging out on the corner or drinking in the taverns. In addition to living on the same property as their parents, young men tend to require looking after or resort to crime to pay for their expensive lifestyle.

The increasing crime in Langa has been touched on above but needs to be discussed here in so far as it speaks to notions of masculinity within Langa. According to Dudu, "...there are gangs here, even younger people are in them, like 15, 14, ya, they are the young ones. They name themselves, they carry guns, and they smoke tik<sup>221</sup>..." These gang crimes range from "hausa hausa", which according to Dudu is housebreak-ins, usually in the suburbs, and hi-jacking. As Dudu explained, the gang members are getting younger and younger and because they are forming their own gangs, they are not subject to the rules and regulations of older gangs. When asked whether the younger gangs had any sense of community boundaries,

---

<sup>221</sup> Tik (crystal meth) is a highly addictive drug that has become increasingly popular with high school children.

like not committing crimes in one's own neighbourhood, Dudu replied, "No, they don't know that. It's the elder ones, the one's that who are older that know that they can't come here, there are those new children that are a danger." The crimes committed in Langa range from the gang crimes, described above, and the more petty crimes, such as ATM card scams, committed by men considered "Ghetto Fabulous" in order to finance their lifestyle, in terms of clothes and liquor.

It is also these gangs that are perceived to be responsible for rapes that occur in Langa, and these rapes, according to Dudu, tend to happen at street bashes, after people, especially women, have consumed copious amounts of alcohol. However, the perpetrators of rape are not only gangsters. A recent article in the Sunday Times<sup>222</sup> revealed an alarming phenomenon that exists in South African schools. It is estimated that one in five high-school boys has raped, many several times. From the 1 370 young men surveyed, 172 raped a non-partner, 64 raped their girlfriends and 51 raped both their girlfriends and other girls<sup>223</sup>. The study revealed that there is a sense of sexual entitlement, the belief that they would not get caught and that police could be persuaded to drop charges. Although this study was carried out in the Eastern Cape, other smaller studies produced similar statistics, for instance 31.4% of men at a correctional facility in Gauteng, admitted to forcing sex and 15% of men in the Western Cape reported sexual violence and 42% physical violence to a partner. Additionally, nearly 55 000 rapes were reported to police nationwide between April 2005 and March 2006<sup>224</sup>. The prevalence of sexual violence against women is shocking and disturbing and this is a reality for many of the young women in Langa. This sense of entitlement also exists within Langa as a story shared by Ntombi reveals, where her cousin met an ex-boyfriend in the club. "He said

---

<sup>222</sup> Davids, N. (2006) "The rapists in school uniform" The Sunday Times, 29/10/06

<sup>223</sup> Ibid

<sup>224</sup> Ibid

‘you never told me you’re not my girlfriend, when did we break up?’ and these girls get raped but she says she wasn’t...he forced her.” Many of the young women knew of women who had been raped by their partners or strangers, for example Dudu’s friend’s mother who was raped and murdered in Langa. This sense of sexual entitlement comes from a particular construction of masculinity that is the reality for many young men in South Africa

### ***Liquor, Women and Babies***

Similarly to the young women in Langa and as touched on earlier, the young men drink copious amounts of alcohol on a regular basis. The young women observed that there is an increase in the amount of liquor consumed after the young men come back from initiation and generally among men in Langa. This coincides with the findings of Rocha-Silva et al<sup>225</sup> in 1994, who found that 40.4% of residents in urban settings consumed alcohol on a regular basis. However, they acknowledged that alcohol consumption was on the rapid increase. In addition, with regard to annual beer intake, men rather than women, tended towards larger amounts of intake. The large consumption of liquor in townships may be owing to a number of factors, one being the lack of alternative activities for young people. Hence, when asked what young people in Langa do, Ntombi said “Drink, party, relationships...drink.”

Relationships are an interesting site to explore and understand as they reveal meaningful insights into gender relations and dynamics on a fundamental level. As earlier chapters have shown, there are constant negotiations of power between men and women regarding appropriate and acceptable behaviour. A deeper exploration of heterosexual relationships is needed to illustrate the particular entrenched notions of feminine and masculine interactions. Moreover, it will reveal how these gender dynamics are reproduced

---

<sup>225</sup> Rocha-Silva, L. et al. (1996) *Alcohol, tobacco and other drug use among black youth*.

within club spaces and in other spaces, as these interactions are not limited to the club but pervade the everyday experiences of both the young men and the young women.

The discussions with the young women revealed that there exists a culture of infidelity within Langa. Some of it is known and done openly, while other times it is more secretive. According to Ntombi, there exists a hierarchy of girlfriends, “People know, the girls know, but there is this thing where there is the girl number 1, 2, 3, 4.” The perception of men that have more than one girlfriend is that “he’s the man.” The more girlfriends one has, the more one is admired and looked up to, usually only by other men. From a man’s perspective, this situation has many advantages, some more obvious than others. Having a number of girlfriends ensures that none of them ‘misbehave’ or ‘act up’ because all the women are trying to get to the number one spot, so no one will step out of line. In any case, if a girlfriend does step out of line, it is not uncommon for her boyfriend to ‘discipline’ her, usually by slapping her. Ntombi witnessed this happening at a party once in Langa, where a girlfriend was upset about her boyfriend’s involvement with another woman. When she confronted him, he slapped her, there and then, in front of everyone at the party.

The majority of the young women informants had boyfriends at some point during the research process. Initially, they seemed to have very strong feelings for their boyfriends. However, as the research progressed, I became increasingly aware of the negative opinions the young women have of their boyfriends<sup>226</sup>. Two of the young women, namely Nomhle and Dudu, had long-term boyfriends. However, when asked whether they had contemplated marriage, they were both adamantly opposed to it. As Nomhle put it, “Oh! I don’t know about marriage...I like my independence and everything. I don’t really think I could give all of that

---

<sup>226</sup> Despite these negative opinions, the women continued to date their boyfriends. It was hard to understand the reasons behind having a boyfriend when the majority found them a nuisance. Unfortunately, it is a shortcoming of this research that that aspect was not explored more deeply.

for a guy. I really doubt it.” Dudu felt the same way, “I don’t want to get married right now. I still want to enjoy life... When will you get the time to go out to the party because obviously we’ll be working or when you come back you’ll have to clean the house and cook for him, ah uh, and its boring too.” The young women associated marriage with the loss of their freedom - especially relating to partying. They were also aware of the expectations of what duties and roles a “wife” has. Additionally, it would stand to reason that these young women have little to no examples of marriage and what examples they do have are riddled with infidelity, sexual and physical violence, therefore, an unattractive possibility.

Many of the young women talked about violence as if it were the norm and indeed if this is something one have been exposed to one’s whole life, it becomes the norm. Many of the young women could recount situations were they had witnessed or heard about violence within relationships. According to Wood et al<sup>227</sup>, violence is a major feature in the lives of black women in South Africa, and this physical violence is carried through to sexual violence. Young women are often forced into having sex, and often it is without a condom. It is hard to know the HIV rates in Langa, however, based on the stories told by the young women, safer sex does not appear to be practiced by young men and, particularly, young women. When Ntombi was asked if the men with many girlfriends used condoms, she admitted, rightfully so, that she had no way of knowing, however, she said “...think about it, these guys are drunk, so even though the first few times they are consciously making use of condoms when you are drunk.... so there is a risk.”

---

<sup>227</sup> Wood, K., Moforah, F. & Jewkes, R (1998) “He forced me to love him”.

Alcohol has been shown to increase the risk of sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS<sup>228</sup>. Carpenter argues that alcohol has been shown to lower social inhibitions, which leads people to engage in behaviour they might otherwise desist from. Furthermore, he argues that it is necessary to understand the impact and extent that alcohol has on risky behaviour, as this has major implications for debates on unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases<sup>229</sup>. It would also shed light on the high number of young mothers in Langa. According to Dudu, out of her group of friends, she is the only one who has not had a child; in fact, about three of her friends are onto their second baby. These young women are the same age as Dudu; therefore they are 19 years old. Many of them are not with the fathers of their children and rely on their mothers and grandmothers to look after the children.

But, why, one could ask, do women not protect themselves, why do they not carry condoms and insist on their use. Understanding this goes back to the powerful notions of normative femininity. The discourse of silence that surrounds issues of sexuality is powerful as it has major negative implications for young women and young men. According to Wood et al<sup>230</sup>, young women who openly discuss sex are labelled *ndlavini* (loose) and this affects communication with their parents/guardians and their sexual partners. As touched on earlier, Ntombi's grandmother was appalled that schools were teaching the students about sex. Nomhle admitted that her mother did not discuss sex with her, but she learnt about it through a youth programme. The lack of communication between mothers and their daughters affects women's sexuality in profoundly negative ways. Firstly, they are not prepared for the

---

<sup>228</sup> Carpenter, C. (2005) Youth alcohol use and risky sexual behaviour: Evidence from underage drunk driving laws. *Journal of Health Economics*, 24, 3. 613-628.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid

<sup>230</sup> Wood, K., Moforah, F. & Jewkes, R (1998) "He forced me to love him".

psychological and emotional impact of sex<sup>231</sup>. Secondly, there is no education about contraception and protection, meaning that young women are not equipped with the knowledge about how to protect their bodies. According to Mkhwanazi<sup>232</sup> the *amaXhosa* traditionally have rites of passage for girls as they are initiated into womanhood - this ritual is called *intonjane*. Similarly to the men's initiation, the details of what the girls are taught remain secret, however, they learn what is expected of them as women and her grandparents advised the girls on "proper conduct" and told not to shame her family. A major part of this ritual is the girls learning sexual techniques, without penetration (*kumetsha*), that they can engage in for pleasure but that also ensure that they remain virgins. The ritual marking the transition from girlhood into womanhood has significant meaning as a way to educate and equip young women. According to Mkhwanazi, "Christianisation, economic difficulties, the decrease in the occurrence of marriage, the increase in cohabitation and out of wedlock births are some factors cited as having led to the dwindling practice of *intonjane*."<sup>233</sup> When asked about rituals for young women in Langa, Dudu said they were none other than the naming ceremony (*umbeleko*) that happens at birth. Therefore the link between the older, wiser generation has been lost and nowadays girls and young women find their way in the dark, without much meaningful guidance.

For the young women who are equipped with this knowledge, they still need to communicate it to their partners, who for various reasons may not want to use a condom. Nomhle, who became pregnant from her first sexual experience, laments not having insisted on using protection, but she admits that her boyfriend at the time and father of the baby, was very manipulative and she felt she could not insist.

---

<sup>231</sup> Lesch, & Kruger (2005) Mothers, daughters and sexual agency in one low-income South African community.

<sup>232</sup> Mkhwanazi, N. (2004) Teenage pregnancy and gender identities in the making in a post-apartheid township.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid, 104

In addition to the expectation that respectable women do not talk about or engage in sexual activities, there is the expectation that if they do partake in these activities, they do so as passive participants<sup>234</sup>. Respectable women are expected to show no sexual desire, and therefore, in many communities it is expected that men coerce or force women to have sex<sup>235</sup>. The notion of masculinity is that men are initiators of sexual activities and owing to the fact that, generally, young women are not meant to show desire and should remain passive, these sexual activities tend to occur against the will of the young woman. Indeed, there are many situations where men force, coerce and rape women because of these expected and accepted feminine and masculine behaviours. However, there are situations where the young women perform the role of the “good girl” while simultaneously engaging in sexual activities that they seek out and enjoy.

However, as shown in the previous chapter, women are active participants in their lives, and do not succumb to all the pressures they experience from different angles. These young women often manage to negotiate successfully, in order to experience the pleasurable feelings. With regard to sexual activities and normative notions of femininity, women gain agency when they are perceived to be passive participants- protecting their image and their household’s reputation- whilst engaging in these “illicit” activities. However, the negotiation of these notions of femininity are up against dominant and powerful notions of masculinity, thus as much as some women are able to use the status quo to their advantage, they are also subject to the entrenched nature of power dynamics within heterosexual relationships.

Many of the young women with boyfriends are aware that they are having affairs with other women, as Lindiwe put it, “guys they do cheat” and Nomhle said about her boyfriend,

---

<sup>234</sup> Salo, E. (2004) Respectable mothers, tough men and good daughters.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid



“he cheated and lied.” The manner in which young men view their women is like objects for possession<sup>236</sup> - the more women one has, the more one is admired. Furthermore, they feel that women are passive objects that can be passed from one man to another, as told by Ntombi, “the guys say ‘yeah you can do her...I’m really in love with this [other] girl.’” This practice of passing women from man to man is not limited to Langa. Davids’ article discusses “streamlining” which could also be called gang rape, where one of the young men said, “we were two; she was my friend’s girlfriend. He was no longer in love with her so he wanted to dump her, so we decided to propose to her and she accepted my love proposal... I called my friend and we both had sex with her.” Streamlining is used as a punishment for women who are considered “loose” or promiscuous, the report published in the Davids’ article quoted that “a woman can be streamlined for her having another partner; for behaving outside gender norms; being successful, or imagining she could be superior,” like in this example, “she was my friend’s girlfriend...and my friend was not in love with her anymore, because of her promiscuity. He called us during the day and told us at night we must streamline her. Then he fetched her...took her to his home. We were three including the boyfriend. Then...my friend, her boyfriend, started and we followed after him and we all did one round and left<sup>237</sup>.”

Although this research did not implicitly expose these kinds of activities in Langa, it still speaks to notions of masculinity that perceive women and their bodies as passive sexual objects.

The number of teenage pregnancies and unwanted pregnancies are quite high in Langa, according to the young women. As mentioned earlier, Dudu was the only one out of all her friends who was not pregnant. As Ntombi observed, once men come back from

---

<sup>236</sup> Mtebule, N (2001). Masculinity at the margins.

<sup>237</sup> Davids, N. (2006) “The rapists in school uniform”

initiation, they begin having children. Ntombi explained that there is a belief that once a man comes back from being circumcised the first woman he sleeps with will have bad luck forever. Therefore, the young men convince their girlfriends that they should have sex with another woman, so as to protect her from bad luck. Very often, this is done without protection leading to pregnancy. During the research process, one of the young women informants, Nomhle, became pregnant, from her now ex-boyfriend. This has been her first sexual experience and her boyfriend had convinced her that a condom was not necessary. Nomhle wanted to have an abortion; firstly because she is young and has many aspirations, and she believes that a baby would hold her back; secondly, because when she discovered that she was pregnant she was no longer with her boyfriend.

Once Nomhle had told her mother about her pregnancy, she decided to keep the baby. However, in order to save face in the community, the father of her baby had to follow certain procedures that involved both families. Similarly to Salo's study in Manneberg<sup>238</sup>, these procedures ensure that both young people take responsibility for the child and, more importantly, that the young man assume accountability for the pregnancy. The man claiming accountability for the pregnancy is important for the young woman's household as she appears to be a passive participant in the process and owing to the fact that it is more acceptable for young men to be sexually active, the man is not perceived negatively. In fact, he is considered to be an honourable man.

Often times, as the young women described, the young men are not active in the lives of their children. According to Dudu, if a child is born out of wedlock the child automatically becomes the responsibilities of the child's mother's mother. However, owing to the fact that

---

<sup>238</sup> Salo, E. (2004) Respectable mothers, tough men and good daughters.

many of the mothers of young women are indeed young themselves, and therefore either still having children, or out partying, the care of the child often falls on the grandmothers. In Nomhle's case, she is currently unemployed and her mother spends the majority of time at work or out enjoying herself. Nomhle believes that as soon as she gives birth to her child, she will be able to participate in the activities that her friends, other 19 year olds, partake in, as she says "it's okay, it's not like fun is going anywhere...when I get back things will get hotter." In her discussing her pregnancy and having the baby, there is little mentioned about the care and effort put into caring for a child. There exists an assumption that the financial and physical needs of the child will be taken care of by either her mother or grandmother.

In situations when young women become pregnant one learns that it is one of the few times that parents are actively involved in their sons' lives and, for some, their daughters' lives. In most cases young men are left to do as they please. This may be due to a number of factors, once being that there is the perception that men are the people in charge of discipline, therefore in households with no men, there is no one left to discipline the young men. Many of the young men come home drunk, and receive no reproach. Furthermore, there are so few boundaries that young men are able to bring home numerous girlfriends that they sleep with in their flats in the backyard of their parents' house. As Ntombi described, "...there is no family structure, a lot of these households are broken, very few where you find a mom and a father together, united. And if you find a father, he's out there having affairs of his own and the woman is inside here trying to keep it all together and pretend as if everything is okay."

The roles of the mother within the household relates to the findings of Salo's study in Manneberg, where the *moeder* holds not only the family together, but the community as

well<sup>239</sup>. The situation in Langa differs slightly as mothers are not always present in the household but the role of the *moeder* is performed by the grandmothers, where grandmothers attempt to instil in their grandchildren a sense of morality and conduct, usually grounded in normative notions of femininity and masculinity, as Nomhle's grandmother attempts to do with her. However, as observed by the young women, young men do not respect their grandmothers as they view them as old fashioned and too restrictive. These were the observations made by Tselane<sup>240</sup>, who argued that part of youth culture is to view the older generation as conservative and controlling, therefore, rebelling against them by engaging in risky behaviour, such as drinking and promiscuity. These seems to be the case for the young men in Langa, although there seem to be deeper reasons for the degeneration in the social fibres that insist on the fair and respectful treatment of people, especially elders and women.

The constructions of masculinity explored in this chapter and the impact this has on the young women's lives reveals disturbing truth about masculine behaviour and women's experiences because of it. The treatment of women as sexual objects has profound implications, as it leads to the trends above, such as multiple-partners, with no guarantee of safer sex, streamlining, the gang rape of women, and physical abuse. This is an alarming phenomenon, and unfortunately, without further research one cannot know the true extent of it in Langa and in the country. However, it discloses the major struggle that young women have to negotiate in their everyday lives. The notion of masculinity that is so powerful, and gains this power from the suppression and abuse of women has been prevalent in our society for too

---

<sup>239</sup> Ibid

<sup>240</sup> Tselane, T. (1989) Black South African youth culture.

long. The report is quoted as saying, “there is an undeclared war on women by men and this should come to an end.”<sup>241</sup>

This chapter has aimed to explore how the performance of hidden/subversive femininity in club spaces is impacted and influence by notions of masculinity. The shift in the policing and monitoring of feminine behaviour by men has major repercussions for the young women, as the notions of masculinity impact profoundly and negatively on women. As illustrated in this chapter, men exercise a great deal of control over their girlfriends or other women, which sometimes goes without question, whilst other times is contested. Revealed in this chapter is not only the connectedness of men and women’s understandings of their gender identity, but also how young people are continually negotiated the different notions of womanhood and manhood. Young men in Langa are caught between traditional expectations of manhood and the reality that in many ways they are unable to meet these expectations, causing them to be frustrated and angry. In many cases, this leads to them to partake in criminal activity, such as theft, hijacking; causes them to join gangs, for protection; causes them to violently abuse women, physically and sexually. The marginality of these young men, similarly to the young women, is not only geographical, but also social and needs to be explored more deeply.

This chapter remains incomplete, as there are many unanswered questions, with regard to constructions of masculinity. Unfortunately, owing to the nature of this research, the focus was on the experiences of women, as it is women’s experiences that are severely lacking in knowledge produced. However, this chapter has aimed to illustrate how by looking at the performance of femininity, one cannot understand it fully or completely, without

---

<sup>241</sup>Davids, N. (2006) “The rapists in school uniform”

understanding constructions of masculinity, especially when dealing with heterosexual norms and interactions. Without taking the experiences of young men into account, one cannot expect to understand women's experiences and on a more fundamental level, cannot hope in achieving changes of the status quo of imbalances in gender relations. And, for this reason, constructions of masculinity are an African feminist agenda.

## *CONCLUSION*

This research locates itself within a feminist paradigm for various reasons. Firstly, African feminist agendas are interested in the experiences of women and other marginalized groups, as they have been excluded from mainstream knowledge. Young black South African women from Langa, occupy the periphery both geographically and socially, and therefore become a major feminist concern. Secondly, the constructions of femininity and masculinity reveal implicit meanings of gender relations and dynamics. Femininity and masculinity, womanhood and manhood, are the parameters in which women and men exist and interact. It is the space where gender identities are reproduced, reinforced, challenge and changed. Lastly, viewing femininity as a performance suggests women's agency and their ability to negotiate the various expectations placed on them. Moreover, it reinforces the notion of femininity and masculinity being social constructs, which can be changed and altered, further suggesting the possibility of gender transformation.

### *Research Process*

Fieldwork research is a challenging undertaking, which requires a great deal of patience, time and money. My reliance on snowball sampling, although tedious and uncertain, was very useful in gathering young women who were diverse in many ways. It was also an opportunity to explore Langa, as I never really knew where the next meeting or the next woman would take me. My journey to Ayanda's house illustrates this well, where I had assumptions about where she would live, based on how I perceived her, but was shocked that she lived in the very heart of Langa, surrounded by all kinds of houses and shacks. The time I spent in Langa exposed me to the many interesting and complex angles within that space. And, it was owing to my use of snowball sampling.

However, the diversity within the group of women meant that I was unsure about which methods would be successful and therefore used a number of methods, with varying effectiveness. Most enlightening was the informal focus group interview conducted in a restaurant. The relaxed atmosphere was conducive for the nature of this research, as it explored women within a similar setting. The candidness on the part of the researchers and on the part of the informants was something very different to my previous experiences, especially for the initial meeting. I feel that often the rigid conventional methods of data gathering increases the distance between the researcher and the informants, thus robbing the research of open and honest responses. Using numerous methods of data collection can only deepen one's exploration and, strengthen the relationship between researcher and informant, as well as minimising the imbalance of power. Creating research that is, hopefully, representative of the people one works with.

### ***Research Findings***

The aim of this study was to deepen the exploration of the performance of femininity, by showing the way in which young women's behaviour shifts and changes depending the various spaces they occupy. It is argued that femininity exists on a spectrum and women locate themselves at different points on the spectrum, at different times, and in different spaces, depending on the expectations of that space. The interest of this research was the particular performance of femininity in nightclub spaces. The interest was in how the body as carrier of femininity, was used in this perform with a focus on appearance and dance. And, how this in turn affects the romantic relationships of the young women informants. However, during the course of the research, a great deal more was uncovered, as dealing with aspects of identity means unpacking the complex meanings and the spaces that it exists in.



Langa, as a geographical space, is located on the margins of the city of Cape Town. Today, it has grown and bustles with life, and yet, the drive from Rondebosch to Langa is like travelling through different worlds and one is reminded of the not so distant past. Langa, as a social space, is complex and layered, as it is diverse in many aspects. The young women informants reflect the diverse nature of Langa, in that they are different in many ways and on many levels. Age, lifecycle, class and education, all influence and contribute to the young women's daily experiences of their gender. Of particular interest is the meaning of class identities and how they manifest in the women's experiences of club spaces.

The identities of the "Ghetto Fabulous" and "Model C" emerged as markers and signifiers of class, as the school one went to, which indirectly reveals one's class background determines these identities. It is perceived by young people that the people who went to schools in the township can be classified into a group they termed "Ghetto Fabulous". "Ghetto Fabulous" refers to people who embody the identity of the township, in this case, they are the young people who speak Xhosa slang most of the time, they went out partying in Langa, their boyfriends and girlfriends were from Langa, and they are considered "rough", "raw" and unladylike. The people who attended school outside the township and who are middle class are identified as "Model C". They are thought to be more refined as they speak English most of the time, date people from outside the township, and because they party outside the township their behaviour is hidden, therefore, "Model C" girls are considered the "township good girls". These two identities are not fixed and stagnant, as there are many examples of people who pass between the two freely. However, these identities proved useful in understanding the impact that class has on the social activities of young people in Langa.

The research revealed that the city space can be divided along class and race lines, although race did not feature as much in the findings, in the places that young people occupy. The “Ghetto Fabulous” women tended to go out to clubs that played *Kwaito*, “house” and RnB music and where the patrons were black. However, the “Model C” girls were more inclined to go to places where RnB and hip-hop music was played and where there was a more racially diverse clientele. Although there exists difference between the two identities, thus affecting their experiences, there are also similarities that run through these experiences.

All the young women are subject to the demands of acceptable feminine behaviour, termed normative femininity. Normative femininity exists on the premises of domesticity and respectability. The degree to which the young women felt pressure to conform to these notions, was found to be dependent on their age/lifecycle and household structure, where older women and/or women with children are allowed relatively more freedom of movement, without the controls or restrictions that the younger childless women faced. In addition, households with young single mothers are less strict than those with older parents or grandmothers. Therefore, the pressures to conform to the notions of domesticity, where women are expected to remain in the home and be responsible for housework, and respectability, where women are expected to abstain from “unladylike” behaviour is dependent on the context in which the women exist. However, regardless of their class identity and their contexts, within club space, these young women’s experiences are very similar.

It has been argued that femininity is a performance that exists on a spectrum, on the one end, the “good girl” is the epitome of normative femininity and the whore/*sleg*/ bad girl is on the other end. The notion of hidden/subversive femininity exists between these two

concepts and is the feminine behaviour that women tend to display within club spaces. This performance is through the body – appearance and dance - and through the activities the young women engage in – flirting and drinking. And, with regard to these behaviours and activities, there is an aspect of pleasure and danger present for all the young women.

In many respects, the occupying of the club space by women and the activities they engage in, challenge the normative notions of femininity and push the boundaries of acceptable feminine behaviour. However, the engagement and interaction with men in that space reproduces and reinforces other particular gender norms that not only affect the women within the clubs but, also impacts on them, in their everyday lives. Although women experience relative freedom within clubs in that they have successfully negotiated access into the space and, can therefore participate in activities such as drinking and dancing, they experience restrictions when they are out with their boyfriends. For the young women, being out with their boyfriends means having to “behave”.

Revealed was the intense desire for the young women to be noticed and admired by other men in the clubs. Hence, the young women put a great deal of effort into their appearance. The importance of women’s appearance speaks volumes about notions of desirability, where women adorn themselves with the intention of gaining men’s attention. Therefore, having a boyfriend present means that the young women cannot enjoy this attention. The inability to enjoy the attentions of other men is because when out with their boyfriends, the young women have to sit, dance and talk with only him. The young men monitor and control the women’s behaviour by accompanying them to clubs or by having their friends report back to them

The boyfriends are strongly against the young women dancing with other men. And, as it is often believed that dancing is the vertical expression of horizontal desire, the boyfriends have a cause for concern. The young women unashamedly admitted that dancing with men differed from dancing with their girl friends because when they dance there is a lot of touching and it is loaded with sexual connotations. It is while dancing that the young women are able to explore their sensual side, hence the reason why the women admitted to dancing with only attractive, good-looking men. The idea of dancing with another man is seen as naughty and this excites the young women, as it means that they can forget the monotony of their lives outside the clubs; they can forget the controls and restrictions placed on them; they can break a taboo.

The use of alcohol within clubs by the young women reveals the extent to which traditional gender norms, which expect that respectable women abstain from alcohol, have changed and shifted, as the young women engaged in the consumption of liquor freely and openly, in club spaces. However, a level of respectability is retained with regard to discussing their alcohol use in front of their family, and extended to the clubs where they are cautious not to drink too much. The reasons behind the self-restriction of alcohol were numerous. Firstly, the young women want to ensure that they remain ladylike, even within an “unladylike” space, thus revealing how entrenched normative notions of femininity are. Secondly, the young women try not to get too drunk for safety, as they need to remain coherent enough so that they are aware of what is going on around them. Lastly, many of the young women’s boyfriends pressure them into stopping drinking, as they feel that they became mischievous when too drunk.

The influence that the young women's boyfriends have on them vary, as some of the young women are adamantly opposed to their boyfriend's restrictions. However, there exists a trend whereby the young men feel entitlement over the young women. This sense of entitlement stems from the constructions of masculinity, which are complex and not adequately explored in this research. However, men in Langa, like other men in South Africa, who occupy spaces on the margins, share similar confusion and frustration. The expectation of what a man is, such as a provider and protector, is hard to achieve owing to the structural location of black men in South Africa. Many have inadequate educations, have poor jobs, or are unemployed, meaning that they are unable to provide or protect for themselves or anyone else. This has led to a resigned attitude, whereby many of these young men live in their parent's backyard, spend their days on the corner, drink copious amounts of alcohol and have multiple girlfriends. This is not to say that all the young men in Langa live like this, in fact many are successfully in school or working and looking after their families, however, based on the young women's experiences, a large number of young men live their lives in a reckless manner.

The impact constructions of masculinity have on the romantic and sexual relationship has profound implications for the safety of the young women. Physical violence, rape, pregnancy and STIs, including HIV, all are real dangers faced by women in Langa. The sense of superiority and entitlement felt by men legitimises, within the community, the shocking treatment of women. Girlfriends are slapped in public, women accept their boyfriend having more than one partner, women become pregnant without support and many may be infected with HIV, but this is speculation.

This research has attempted to unpack the complex nature of gender identity by focusing on clubs as a space where women simultaneously challenge and contest the traditional gender norms of respectable feminine behaviour, and reinforce and reproduce particular gender power dynamics between men and women. However, the engagements within club spaces, and the participation in dangerous activities can and should be hindered. Young women tend to occupy club spaces, as there were few alternatives, in terms of leisure activities. Young men hang out on the corner or drinking in the taverns because there is little else to do.

### ***Recommendations***

I argue that the lack of alternative social activities, for young people in Langa, owing to the lack of resources and mismanagement of facilities and funds, means that young people are left with little options and the taverns, bars and clubs, that are in abundance, become very attractive and therefore are frequented by young people. Although there is great pleasure experienced within clubs, hence the reason for their popularity, the possibility of danger is real and should thus be taken into account. The copious consumption of alcohol, which research suggests is on the increase in black communities in South Africa, influences the behaviour of young people and it is believed to contribute to high rates of STD infections. Therefore, it is important to understand the dynamics within this space when addressing issues that affect youth in South Africa. Providing young people with meaningful and constructive alternatives may impact positively on the lives of young people.

Of great importance is the exploration and understanding of masculinity, within a South African context. The various messages that young men receive about what a “man” is and their inability to live up to these expectations, leads to them being frustrated, which then

leads them to engage in criminal and gang activity, as well as having negative effects on women. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that notions of masculinity are explored and understood, as a way to deconstruct and redefine notions of manhood that do not centre on violence, alcohol use and unsafe sexual practises. Putting in alternative institutions that have been left vacant by strong traditional practices or, reintroducing them may be a way to give guidance and structure to young men.

Similarly, it is important that young women receive guidance that traditionally would have been provided in rites of passage or, in conversations with female relatives. With this lacking and the break down of the family, young women often make their way in the dark, some successfully, others not as fortunate. In the case of Nomhle, if her mother had engaged her in conversations about relationships and sex, perhaps Nomhle would not have the child she was not ready for. Therefore, structures need to be put in place that educate, inform and guide young people and, hopefully, this will impact positively young people's experiences. The research presented here was undertaken with the intention of bringing to light the stories and experiences of young black women who reside in Langa township. However, it is important to note that, although the research was carried out with specific women in a specific space, their experiences are not alien to other young women in South Africa. Theirs is informed by issues of race, class, location, age and culture, as is true of all other women, but there are common links around issues of pleasure and danger in the social activities of young women in South Africa. Women, at some point or another, are all subject to controls and restrictions that aim to mould them from "good girls" into good wives and mothers, whether it is through their parents, religion or media. However, this research has also revealed the

intricacies of identity, in that it is fluid and changing, and therefore, can be performed in different spaces, at different times, with different outcomes.

These young women, because of their structural location exist on the periphery, are often ignored or misrepresented in mainstream knowledge production. Therefore, this research aims to give a voice to these young women. It is these stories and experiences that not only bring awareness to the both the positive and negative realities of the young women, but also reveal the impact on and meaning of notions of femininity and to some extent masculinity. It aims to reveal the young women's agency as they negotiate their identities in this space. But, it also addresses the dangers and powerlessness they experience. It has attempted to paint a picture of their lives, and my hope is that my research has given voice to the both the immanent forms of agency and constraint that these young women experience in their daily lives in this post apartheid township.



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Andersen, K & Jack, D. (1991) Learning to Listen: Interview techniques and analyses. In S. Gluck & D. Patai (eds) *Women's words: The feminist practice of oral history*. Routledge
- Babbie, E. & Mouton, J. (2001) *The practice of social research*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Bhavnani, K. (1994) Tracing the contours: Feminist research and feminist objectivity. In H. Ashar & M Taylor (eds.) *The Dynamics of "Race" and Gender: Some Feminist Interventions*. London; Taylor&Francis.
- Boloka, G. (2000) Cultural studies and the transformation of the music industry: Some reflections on *Kwaito*. In H. Wasserman & S. Jacobs (eds.) *Shifting Selves: post-apartheid essays on mass media, culture and identity*. Cape Town: Kwela Books.
- Buckland, F. (2002) *Impossible dance: Club culture and queer world making*. Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press.
- Budlender, D. (2003) Women and men in South Africa: Five years on. Pretoria: SA Stats.
- Bundy, C. (1993) At war with the future? Black South African youth in the 1990s. Institute of Historical Research: UWC.
- Campbell, C. (1994) *Township families and youth identity*. Co-operative Research Programme on Marriage and Family Life. Human Sciences Research Council.
- Carpenter, C. (2005) Youth alcohol use and risky sexual behaviour: evidence from underage drunk driving laws. *Journal of Health Economics*, 24;3, p613-628.

CASE (Community Agency for Social Enquiry) (2000) *Youth 2000: A study of youth in South Africa*. Braamfontein: Royal Netherlands Embassy.

Census 2001

Chapkis, W. (1986) *Beauty secrets: Women and the politics of appearance*. New York: South End Press.

Coplan, D. (1985) *In the township tonight: South Africa's Black city music and theatre*. Johannesburg : Ravan Press.

Cornwall, A. & Lindisfarne, N. (1996) *Dislocating masculinity: Comparative ethnographies*. New York: Routledge.

Crush, J. & Ambler, C. (1992) *Liquor and labour in Southern Africa*. Petermaritzburg: University of Natal Press.

Dauids, N. The rapists in school uniform. *Sunday Times*, 29/10/06.

Economist. One way to get rich in Soweto. *Economist*, 354, 8160, p85.

Ettore, E. (1997) *Women and alcohol; A private pleasure or a public problem?* London: The Women's Press Ltd.

Gefou-Madianou, D (ed) (1992) *Alcohol, gender and culture*. New York: Routledge.

Giddens, A. (1992) *The transformation of intimacy: Sexuality, love and eroticism in modern societies*. Oxford: Polity Press.

Green, E., Hebron, S. & Woodward, C. (1990) *Women's leisure: What leisure?* Hampshire: Macmillan.

Haanyama, M. (2005) "Generations" in a new South Africa: Negotiating constructions of gendered identities through the medium of television. (Research project for the partial fulfilment for BSocSc Honours degree) Cape Town: AGI.

Hanna, J.L. (1988) *Dance, Sex and gender: Signs of identity, dominance, defiance and desire*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Harding, S (1987) Introduction: Is there a feminist method? In Harding (ed.) *Feminism and methodology*. Bloomington: Indiana University, Open University Press.

Hassim, S. (2002) Nationalism, feminism and autonomy: the ANC in exile and the question of women. Paper at Conference "Re-conceptualising democracy and liberation in South Africa". Windhoek, Namibia.

Haupt, A. (2003) Hip-hop, gender and agency in the age of empire. *Agenda: Urban culture*, 57.

Imam, A (1997) Introduction to Engendering African social sciences. Dakar: CODESRIA.

Izugbara, C. (2005) Patriarchal ideology and the discourses of sexuality in Nigeria. In *Socialisation and Sexuality Discourse in Nigeria*. Understanding Human Sexuality Seminar Series 2. Lagos: ARSRC.

Jaggar, A & Bordo, S. (1992) *Gender/Body/Knowledge: Feminist reconstructions of being and knowing*. New Jersey: Rutgers University Press.

Kavanagh, R.M. (1985) *Theatre and cultural struggle in South Africa*. London: Zed Books.

Lesch & Kruger. (2005) Mothers, daughters and sexual agency in one low-income South African community. *Social Science and Medicine*, 61, 5. Pp 1072-1082.

MacPhail, C & Campbell, C. (2001) "I think condoms are good but, aai, I hate those things": Condom use among adolescent and young people in a Southern African township. *Social Science and Medicine*, 52, 11. Pp 1613-1627.

Mager, A. (2003) 'White liquor hits black livers': meanings of excessive liquor consumption in South Africa in the second half of the twentieth century. *Social Science and Medicine*, 59:4, p735-751.

Mama, A (2002) Editorial. *Feminist Africa: Intellectual politics*, 1.

Mama, A. (1999). Mothers of the nation, daughters of the soil: The positioning of women politicians in a military state. Cape Town: Centre for African Studies, UCT.

Masland, T. (2004). Generation Born Frees. *Newsweek*, 143:14, p42

Mbilinyi, M (1992) Research methodologies in gender issues. In R. Meena (ed) *Gender in South Africa*. SAPES: Harare.

McCarthy, J. (2001) Local and regional government: from rigidity to crisis to flux. In D. Smith (ed.) *The Apartheid City and Beyond: Urbanization and the social change in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press.

McFadden, P. (2003) Sexual Pleasure as feminist choice. *Feminist Africa: Changing Cultures*, 2.

McLaren, M,G,T. (2005) Sweetie my baby: Impact of the "culture of music" on the constructions of gender identity of young black women in Langa. (Research project for the partial fulfilment for BSocSc Honours degree) Cape Town: AGI.

- Meier, J. (2000) *On the Margins: the emergence and growth of squatter settlements in Cape Town*. University of Florida, Thesis.
- Mkhwazani, N. (2004) Teenage pregnancy and gender identities in the making in a post-apartheid South African township. Cambridge University. (Unpublished PhD thesis)
- Mtebule, N. (2001) Masculinity at the margins: Researching young black urban masculinities in the Post-Apartheid. History Workshop & Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research. Johannesburg: University of Witswaterstrand.
- Mupotsa, D. (2005) Zvimwe Hazvibunzwe. On the Politics of Being a Black Zimbabwean Woman and a Sexual Being. (Research Project submitted in partial fulfillment for the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Social Science (Hons).) University of Cape Town.
- Myers, M (2000) *Psychology*: 6<sup>th</sup> Edition. New York: Worth Publishers.
- Narayan, U (1989) The project of feminist epistemology: perspective from a non-Western feminist. In A. Jagger and S. Bordo (eds.) *Gender/ Body/ knowledge: Feminist reconstructions of being and knowing*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press.
- Nueman, W.L. (1997) Qualitative research design Ch 13. In *Social Research Methods* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Oakley, A. (2000) *Experiments in knowing gender and method in the social sciences*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Papagaroufali, E. (1992) Uses of alcohol among women. In D. Gefou-Madianou (ed) *Alcohol, gender and culture*. New York: Routledge.

- Pereira, C. (2003) *Feminist Knowledge. African Transitions: A Symposium on the continent's engagement with democracy*, #490.
- Pereira, C. (2003) "Where Angels fear to tread?" Some thoughts on Patricia McFadden's "Sexual Pleasure as feminist choice". *Feminist Africa: Changing Culture 2*.
- Ramphela, M. (1992) Social disintergration in the black community. In D. Everatt & E. Sisulu (Eds.) *Black Youth in Crisis: Facing the future*. Braamfontein: Ravan Press.
- Ramphela, M. (2002) *Steering by the stars: Being young in South Africa*. Cape Town: Tafelberg.
- Reinharz, S (1992) Feminist action research, Chp 10. In *Feminist methods in social research*. Oxford University Press: UK
- Roberts, K. (1983) *Youth and leisure*. London: George Allan & UNWIN.
- Rocha-Silva, L., de Miranda, S. & Erasmus, R. (1996) *Alcohol, tobacco and other drug use among black youth*. Pretoria: HSRC.
- Rwebangira, M & Liljestom, R. (1998) *Haraka, Haraka...look before you leap: Youth at the crossroad of custom and modernity*. Sweden: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.
- Salo, E. (2004) Respectable mothers, tough men and good daughters: producing persons in Manenberg township, South Africa. Emory University (Unpublished PhD Thesis).
- Seidler, V. J. (2006) *Young men and masculinities: Global cultures and intimate lives*. New York: Zed Books.
- Shaw, S. (2003) Feminist approaches to the study of leisure. In P. Zeleza & R.V. Veney (eds.) *Leisure in urban Africa*. Eritrea: Africa World Press Inc.

- Sox, F. (1997) The Social Sciences in Africa and gender analysis. In A. Imam, A. Mama & F. Sow (eds.) *Endgendering the Social Sciences*. Dakar: CODESRIA.
- Spivak, G.C. (1994) Can the subaltern speak? In P. Williams & L. Chrisman (eds.) *Colonial discourse and post-colonial theory*. Columbia University Press: New York.
- Thomas, H & Ahmed, J. (2004) *Cultural bodies: Ethnography and theory*. UK: Blackwell Publishers.
- Thornton, S (1995) *Club Cultures: music, media and subcultural media*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Tselane, T. (1989) Black South Africa youth culture. Dissertation presented at Wits University Sociology department.
- Walker, C (1991) *Women and resistance in South Africa*. Cape Town: D. Phillip.
- Weeks, J. (1985) *Sexuality and its discontents: Meanings, myths and modern sexuality*. London: Routledge.
- Western, J. (1996) *Outcast Cape Town*. Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Wilson, M & Mafeje, A. (1973) *Langa: A study of social groups in an African township*. Cape Town: Oxford University Press.
- Wood, K, Moforah, F & Jewkes, R. (1998). "He forced me to love him": Putting violence on adolescent sexual health agendas. *Social Science and Medicine*, 47, 2. Pp 233-242.

Xaba, T. (1997). Masculinities in Southern Africa. Colloquium. University of Natal Durban,  
2-4 July 1997.

Zezeza, P.T & Veney, R.V. (2003). Leisure in urban Africa. Eritrea: Africa World Press Inc.



## *Appendix A*

***Table of Informants***

Name	Age	Place of birth	Household make-up	School	Employment Status
Nomhle	19	Langa	Mother, grandmother, aunt, cousin and child.	Township	Unemployed
Ayanda	19	Langa	Mother, Father and brother.	Model C	Student
Dudu	21	Langa	Mother and grandmother	Township	Unemployed
Lindiwe	24	Eastern-Cape	Two sisters and cousin	Township	Employed
Zinzi	26	Eastern-Cape	Daughter and sister	Township	Employed
Ntombi	26	Langa	Mother, stepfather and cousin.	Model C	Employed
Thandi	26	Eastern-Cape	Sister, son and cousin.	Township	Employed

## *Appendix B*

### *Semi-Structured Interview Framework*

#### **Background**

- ~ What do you do?
- ~ Who do you live with?
- ~ Where did you go to school?
- ~ What's your highest educational qualification?
- ~ What are your future plans?
- ~ How do you spend your day?
- ~ What responsibilities do you have in your household?

#### • **Going Out**

- ~ What activities or resources are available for young people in Langa?
- ~ What do you do in your free time?
- ~ Which clubs do you go to?
- ~ How do you decide what club to go to? What attracts you to a club?
- ~ How do you prepare to go out?
- ~ How do you decide what to wear? And what does your outfit typically look like?
- ~ Do you feel any kind of pressure to look/dress a certain way?

#### • **Clubbing**

- ~ What do you spend most of your time doing in the club?
- ~ Do you drink alcohol? If yes, what?
- ~ Do you ever feel pressure to drink?
- ~ How much do you drink on an average night?
- ~ Who buys your drinks?
- ~ How do you respond to people you don't know offering to buy you drinks?
- ~ How do you respond when men ask to dance with you?
- ~ Have you ever felt unsafe or in danger?

#### • **People**

- ~ What are the people like in the places you go? Race, gender etc.
- ~ Have you ever felt uncomfortable or unwanted in a club or bar?
- ~ Who do you go out with?
- ~ How do you feel about meeting people in clubs?
- ~ Have you ever met someone in a club that has led to a relationship?
- ~ Would you/ do you go out to clubs with your partner?
- ~ What do you think are the differences between going out to clubs alone and with your partner?

#### • **Community Attitudes and Beliefs**

- ~ How does your family feel about you going out clubbing?
- ~ And drinking?
- ~ What is considered respectable behaviour for young women in your community?
- ~ Do you think your family/community feel differently about young men's behaviour?
- ~ How do young men and women behave differently?

#### • **Thoughts**

- ~ What do you think the attraction to going out is?